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Innovations and Turning Points

TOWARD A HISTORY *of* *KĀVYA* LITERATURE

edited by
Yigal Bronner
David Shulman
Gary Tubb

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For Vidwan H. V. Nagaraja Rao

udanvac-chinnā bhūḥ sa ca nidhir apāṃ yojana-śataṃ
sadā pānthaḥ pūṣā gagana-parimāṇaṃ kalayati /
iti prāyo bhāvāḥ sphurad-avani-mudrā-mukulitāḥ
satāṃ prajñônmeṣaḥ punar ayam a-sīmā vijayate //
—*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1223,
by Rājaśekhara

The earth is hemmed in by the sea.
The sea stops after a thousand miles.
The sky is measured day after day
by the sun in its rounds.
That's the way of the world:
all things are sealed and confined—
only the wise man's flash of insight
knows no bounds.

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I

Introduction

Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb

A. *Asti kaścid vāg-viśeṣaḥ*

There is a tradition that Kālidāsa, one of the greatest of the Sanskrit poets, was originally an ignorant yokel. Married, in complicated circumstances, to a highly sophisticated princess, he was so ashamed by his lack of education that he sought the help of the goddess Kālī. She filled him with the power of poetic invention. When he returned, thus transformed, to his new bride and spoke to her with his new-found gift, she was amazed and said: *asti kaścid vāg-viśeṣaḥ*, literally, "There's something different about your speech."

This is a pregnant statement. For one thing, each of the first three words uttered by the princess is the opening to one of Kālidāsa's three major poems: *asti* is the first word of the *Kumārasambhava*; *kaścid* of the *Meghadūta*; and *vāg* of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. So the sentence provides a conspectus of the poet's oeuvre, possibly in the order in which these works were composed.[1] Moreover, the tradition has put into the mouth of the princess an implicit evaluation of these three works as distinctive, indeed ground-breaking. Although our record of pre-Kālidāsa Sanskrit poetry is sparse, there is good reason to think that each of the three works does something profoundly new. On the level of genre alone, each innovates radically—and much more could be said about syntax, thematics, metrics, and other parameters of style.

1. See Tubb 1982 on the relative priority of *Kumārasambhava* to *Raghuvaṃśa*.

Here the tradition echoes Kālidāsa's own statement in the prologue to his play *Mālavikāgnimitra*. The Director (*sūtradhāra*) is conversing with his assistant, who asks:

> Why should we prefer a play by Kālidāsa, a contemporary poet, to the works of such famous authors as Bhāsa, Saumilla, and Kaviputra?[2]

The Director responds:

> You're speaking without thinking, my friend. Look:
>
> Not everything that is old is therefore good.
> Nor should a poem be faulted just because it's new.
> Able critics look closely before approving either one.
> Only fools blindly follow what others think.[3]

The assistant seems to imply that "older is better"—a view that lingers on in most so-called histories of Sanskrit poetry. The dominant, classicizing view holds that Sanskrit poetry reached its peak very early, and that everything that happened later—after the fifth century CE—belonged to a process of long decay. This view paradoxically goes hand in hand with a perception that commentators *within* the Sanskrit tradition have emphasized, namely the timelessness of the Sanskrit language, in general, and of its individual literary productions. It is as if innovation, in a positive sense, were totally alien to this long, continuously creative tradition.

In response to the assistant's rhetorical query, the Director reminds us that literary merit is not necessarily a function of age but can only be determined by open-minded, close critical inspection. There is room, according to Kālidāsa's verse, for something new to emerge—and clearly he thinks his new play is at least as worthy as his predecessors' works. It is thus somewhat ironic that a later perspective has enshrined Kālidāsa as the first and last great Sanskrit poet, a changeless and timeless standard of excellence in a tradition that has steadily declined. One result of this stultifying presumption is that most of Sanskrit poetry has not been carefully read, at least not in the last two centuries.

If, however, we adopt the Director's advice and read Sanskrit *kāvya* with an open mind, we see evidence of tremendous vitality and continuous change.

2. Nothing by Saumilla and Kaviputra has survived. Bhāsa is the subject of a long controversy, but we accept Tieken's conclusion that of the thirteen plays attributed to him, perhaps only the *Svapnavāsavadatta* is original or derived from a Bhāsa original. See Tieken 1993.

3. *purāṇam ity eva na sādhu sarvaṃ*
na câpi kāvyaṃ navam ity avadyam/
santaḥ parīkṣyânyatarad bhajante
mūḍhaḥ para-pratyaya-neya-buddhiḥ// Mālavikāgnimitra 1.2.

What is more, the notion of innovation is a remarkably consistent topos throughout the classical and medieval literature. The poets themselves very often remark on the novelty of their own work as well as that of particular poets who came before them. In this sense, Kālidāsa's verse—which names three of his predecessors—is a relatively early example of a recurrent theme. Here is a small sample.

Some two centuries after Kālidāsa, Bāṇa—one of the most original figures in the tradition by any standard—offers the following paronomastic assertion of his own creativity:

> Pedestrian poets are as common as domestic dogs.
> You can hear them barking in house after house.
> Inventive poets, truly outstanding,
> are as rare as superpolypedal beasts.[4]

The point of the verse is not so much a devaluation of contemporaneous poets—although that, too, is a common theme—but rather an assertion that innovation is the major criterion for poetic merit. This principle is strongly and overtly stated by Māgha (seventh century) in a famous verse describing Kṛṣṇa's first glimpse of Mount Raivataka (Girnar):

> Even though Murāri [Kṛṣṇa] saw the mountain not for the first time,
> he was amazed as if he'd never seen it before.
> The essence of beauty is to become new
> at every moment.[5]

Dharmakīrti, probably a contemporary of Māgha, poignantly describes the experience of a poet who is breaking new ground:

> No one is walking ahead.
> No one follows behind.
> There are no fresh footprints on the road.
> Could I be all alone?
> I understand.
> The path taken by those before me
> is now desolate,

4. *santi śvāna ivâsaṅkhyā jāti-bhājo gṛhe gṛhe/*
utpādakā na bahavaḥ kavayaḥ śarabhā iva// Harṣacarita 1.5.

The beast in question is the eight-legged *śarabha*, a lion-like creature with four more feet growing upwards from its back (*utpādaka*).

5. *dṛṣṭo 'pi śailaḥ sa muhur murârer apūrvavad vismayam ātatāna//*
kṣaṇe kṣaṇe yan navatām upaiti tad eva rūpaṃ ramaṇīyatāyāḥ// Śiśupālavadha 4.17.

and it's obvious I've left behind
the crowded, easy one.[6]

Bhavabhūti, in the early eighth century, echoes this sense of the creative poet's loneliness, at the same time exhibiting a remarkable self-confidence about the value of his work—precisely because he feels it is highly original:

Those who scorn me now
know what they know.
My work is not for them.
Someday someone will be born
who shares my nature,
for time is boundless
and the world is wide.[7]

Abhinanda, in the ninth century, commends his patron for his daring:

Of rulers who have minds made pure
by a proper grasp of quality,
Haravarṣa alone now reigns supreme,
since he has dared to scorn the view
that innovation is a fault
and has shown a liking
for my poem on the life of Rāma.[8]

Bilhaṇa, at the end of the eleventh century, tells us in the course of a series of metapoetic statements:

A poet's words are worthiest
when they break the boundaries of traditional style
by their outstanding boldness.

6. *vahati na puraḥ kaścit paścān na ko'pi anuyāti māṃ*
na ca nava-pada-kṣuṇṇo mārgaḥ kathaṃ nv aham ekakaḥ/
bhavatu viditaṃ pūrva-vyūḍho 'dhunā khilatāṃ gataḥ
sa khalu bahalo vāmaḥ panthā mayā sphuṭaṃ urjitaḥ// Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1729.
7. *ye nāma kecid iha naḥ prathayanty avajñāṃ*
jānanti te kimapi tān prati naiṣa yatnaḥ/
utpatsyate tu mama ko'pi samāna-dharmā
kālo hy ayaṃ niravadhir vipulā ca pṛthvī// Mālatīmādhava 1.6.

We are indebted to an earlier translation of Bhavabhūti's verse by Daniel H. H. Ingalls (Ingalls 1965: 445, verse 1731).

8. *saṃyag-guṇa-graha-pavitra-dhiyāṃ prabhūnām*
ekaḥ paraṃ jayati samprati haravarṣaḥ/
doṣaṃ navatvam avadhūya dadhe prasahya
naiṣa rāma-caritaṃ prati pakṣa-pātaḥ// Rāmacarita, tag verse before *sarga* 20.

A beloved's breasts are to be praised
when they burst their seams
on account of their unique elevation.[9]

A century later Śrīharṣa compares his *mahākāvya, Naiṣadhīyacarita*, to a traveler walking on a path never seen before by the entire "family of poets" (*kavi-kulâdṛṣṭâdhva-pānthe mahā-kāvye*, 8.109). Note again the metaphor of the untrodden poetic path.

Many similar verses can easily be found throughout the long history of the tradition.[10] Artistic innovation turns up in metapoetic statements by many if not most of the great Sanskrit poets, in the following senses: a poet will claim to be doing something totally unprecedented; novelty is taken as the touchstone for quality in poetic production; and there is an implicit or explicit appeal to the critics to recognize and value such innovation. Thus Murāri (tenth century) presents us with the following verse, ostensibly a description of sunrise:

The bees, by close attention,
reveal what no one else can see—
which of the unfolding lotus buds
are newly open
and which have already
opened once
and closed
and now open again.[11]

Since the early days of *kāvya*, sensitive critics have been metaphorically identified with honey-seeking bees.[12] Murāri's image extends the metaphor in order to make a new point: although all the unfolding lotus flowers look alike, the

9. *prauḍhi-prakarṣeṇa purāṇa-rīti-vyatikramaḥ ślāghyatamaḥ padānām/*
atyunnati-sphoṭita-kañcukāni vandyāni kāntā-kuca-maṇḍalāni// Bilhaṇa, *Vikramâṅkadevacarita* 1.15.5.

See also Bronner (Chapter 17) in this volume, for a discussion of this section of Bilhaṇa's poem.

10. For example: *Kīcakavadha*, 2.1 (on which see Bronner 2010, 286 n. 10); *Yādavābhyudaya* 1.6:

tadātve nūtanaṃ sarvam āyatyāṃ ca purātanam/
na doṣāyaitad ubhayaṃ na guṇāya ca kalpate//

What seems new at the time will be seen as old in the future.

11. *vikasita-saṅkucita-punar-vikasvareṣv ambujeṣu durlakṣyāḥ/*
kalikāḥ kathayati nūtana-vikāsinīr madhu-lihām arghaḥ //Anargharāghava 2.12.

For more on Murāri, see Shulman (Chapter 16) in this volume.

12. One is tempted to think of *Abhijñānaśākuntala* 5.1 as such an instance, although the first-level metaphor is of the bee as a lover.

bee—the gifted critic—can identify what is truly fresh. By implication, the mere existence of a shared language of conventional tropes and inherited poetic devices tells us nothing about a poet's uniqueness. A great poet uses in a novel way the materials he has been given by the tradition. Our hope in this volume is to follow Murāri's implicit recommendation—to be able to discern freshness where it exists. The lingering view that Sanskrit poetry is monolithic, self-replicating, and ultimately sterile is untenable. Let us recall that *kāvya* has always envisaged its origins in a moment of shocking discovery—when Vālmīki, the first poet, released into the world a verse form never heard before. The introduction to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which tells this episode, stresses the poet's own delighted astonishment at this new expressive device (as well as that of his student Bhāradvaja).[13] A cultural world that values innovation and cherishes the joy of surprise (*camatkāra*)—a world attuned to noticing what is new and different in poetic speech (*kaścid vāg-viśeṣaḥ*), as in the story we have cited—must have a history which highlights moments of consequential change.

B. Awareness of Change

But how does one recognize change—especially in the context of tremendous continuities in language, figuration, and many structural and formal features? What kind of language is available to describe moments of innovation? One place to begin is with the internal perspectives that the Sanskrit tradition itself offers on its history. (This is what Sheldon Pollock has called "studying Sanskrit literary culture from the inside out.")[14] These include what poets have to say about other poets; what poets have to say about their own poetry in its relation to that of their predecessors, and in general; popular accounts and assessments (as in the story with which we began); and the explicit remarks of professional critics and theorists (*ālaṅkārikas*). All these modes imply a certain cultural or personal selection and evaluation. We will take them one by one.

B.1. What Poets Say about Other Poets

Descriptions of fellow poets by any given author tend to be formulaic and limited in scope. Often we find in the introduction to a work a relatively limited

13. *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.2. 8–21. See Pollock's discussion of this story of origins (Pollock 2006, 77–78). Rājaśekhara's alternative myth of origins stresses a similar theme of intoxicating discovery—of using metrical verse for non-religious purposes (*bhāṣā-viṣaye*). *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 3, pp. 6–7; cf. Pollock 2006, 200–204.

14. Pollock 2003, 39ff.; cf. Pollock 2006, 2–5, where he rephrases his "methodological commitment to *vyāvahārika sat*."

list of former poets praised in general terms (*kavi-praśaṃsā*).[15] Sometimes, however, such verses include specific observations about characteristic poetic features. Consider the following:

> Subandhu we worship.
> Who in the world doesn't love the *Raghu* poet?[16]
> Pāṇini, Dākṣī's son, is a pleasure.
> Haricandra steals one's heart.
> Śūra's words are lucid.
> Bhāravi's voice is naturally charming.
> But we can't name the delight that Bhavabhūti
> spreads inside us.[17]

The initial series of poets is striking in its breadth. It juxtaposes Subandhu, the pioneer prose master, with Kālidāsa, the master-*kavi*; with Pāṇini, an anthologized poet here identified with the great grammarian; with Haricandra, about whom we know nothing;[18] with the Buddhist author (Ārya-) Sura; and with Bhāravi, another *mahā-kavi*. The selection is interesting in itself—also because each of these names is axiomatically "great." A certain glibness marks the brief epithets, chosen partly for purposes of alliteration. But when the poet reaches Bhavabhūti in the fourth line, something remarkable happens. First, both the glibness and the alliteration disappear. Second, the speaker makes an apparently heart-felt statement that recognizably mimics the diction and syntax of Bhavabhūti himself. Bhavabhūti is obsessed with speaking about inner experience; he likes to tell us how indescribable these experiences are; and syntactically he specializes in strongly marked contrast at the culmination of his verses. Not only does this verse convey these peculiarities of Bhavabhūti with precision, but the very fact that it is able to do so derives from the distinctiveness of Bhavabhūti's style. Set against the preceding list of names, this comment is a recognition of meaningful and effective novelty.

The list is obviously not intended to be exhaustive. Bhavabhūti himself is mentioned elsewhere as part of a series of poets involved in the sequential unfolding of a new, vigorous style originated by Bāṇa in the seventh century. *Kavi-praśaṃsā* sections often do just this: they offer more than a mere selection or catalogue of individual poets. They tend rather to draw evolutionary sequences

15. Pollock 1995 has discussed these in detail.
16. = Kālidāsa.
17. *subandhau bhaktir naḥ ka iha raghu-kāre na ramate*
dhṛtir dākṣī-putre harati haricandro 'pi hṛdayam/
viśuddhoktiḥ śūraḥ prakṛti-subhagā bhāravi-giras
tathâpy antar-modam kamapi bhavabhūtir vitanute// Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1698.
18. Bāṇa praises him among his predecessors.

by positioning particular poets within what they perceive to be a line of interconnected innovators. An example by one of the so-called Pāla poets (either Yogeśvara or Abhinanda) is the following, preserved in one of the later anthologies:

> Bhavabhūti rediscovered it
> long after Bāṇa walked it every day.
> Kamalāyudha frequented it,
> and Keśaṭa traveled on it, too.
> Then Śrī Vākpatirāja graced its dust with his feet.
> That this road is still open to someone with real talent
> is our great good fortune.[19]

Although the image of the path is shared with Dharmakīrti and Śrīharṣa (quoted earlier), the tone is happier, since the emphasis is not so much on the poet's isolation within a given social and cultural setting but on the continuity he feels with a tradition of distinctive merit. The list he supplies is, it seems, a chronologically accurate series of historical poets with discernible links to one another. Notice the central importance ascribed to Bāṇa, who walked the path, *mārga*, every day. The speaker in the poem positions himself on a special path mapped out—perhaps for the first time, *purā*—by Bāṇa and followed by a small group qualified to be recognized as Bāṇa's true successors.[20]

Kavi-praśaṃsā verses are sometimes generic and stereotypical, but occasionally highly specific, rather powerful statements appear, as in another pair of verses ascribed to Abhinanda; in one he speaks of his fellow-poet Yogeśvara and his unique descriptions ("scenes of village and tribal women from the Revā River and the Vindhya Mountains"), and in the second he offers a touchingly detailed portrait of the personality of his friend, the poet Rājaśekhara.[21] Rājaśekhara himself actually puts a verse in the mouth of his astrologer claiming that he,

19. *unnīto bhavabhūtinā pratidinaṃ bāṇe gate yaḥ purā*
yaś cīrṇaḥ kamalâyudhena suciraṃ yenâgamat keśaṭaḥ/
yaḥ śrī-vākpati-rāja-pāda-rajasāṃ samparka-pūtaś ciraṃ
diṣṭyā ślāghya-guṇasya kasyacid asau mārgaḥ samunmīlati// Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1733.

20. For the centrality of Bāṇa, see below. For a discussion of other meanings of *mārga*, see Pollock 2006, 106–08, 424–27.

21. *tātaḥ sṛṣṭim apūrva-vastu-viṣayām eko 'tra nirvyūḍhavān*
niṣṇātaḥ kavi-kuñjarendra-carite mārge girāṃ vāguraḥ/
revā-vindhya-pulindra-pāmara-vadhū-jhañjhānila-preṣita-
prāye 'rthe vacanāni pallavayituṃ jānāti yogeśvaraḥ// Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1699.

> Father [Śatānanda] alone created a world of unprecedented things.
> Vāgura knew the path of words blazed by the best of poets.
> Yogeśvara knows how to bring to flower
> scenes of village and tribal women from the Revā River

Rājaśekhara, was a reincarnation of three great poets—Vālmīki, Bhartṛmentha, and Bhavabhūti.[22]

As these examples suggest, *kavi-praśaṃsās* are not only tributes to specific geniuses but also, at times, mini-histories of how breakthroughs happen—as seen, usually, by a poet who claims to be part of particular literary movements. A poet connects himself to what he perceives as a lineage; this perception fulfills itself in his own work; he establishes an identity for himself within the terms of this progression and in that context sometimes articulates the features he sees as original or unique. Take, for example, the lineage of bitextual (*śleṣa*) poets beginning with Subandhu, the prose poet who figures prominently in such praises. Subandhu celebrates his innovative prose style by declaring it—with some exaggeration—to be bitextual in each and every syllable (*pratyakṣara-śleṣa-maya-prapañca-vinyāsa-vaidagdhya-nidhim*).[23] Bāṇa, who continued the prose experiment begun by Subandhu, tells us in the introduction to his *Harṣacarita* (verse 11) that the *Vāsavadattā* (the title of Subandhu's work) melted away the pride of poets (*kavīnām agalad darpo nūnaṃ vāsavadattayā* [*śaktyeva*]). Significantly, this statement is itself an example of bitextuality, its second register referring to a victory in the *Mahābhārata* war.

Centuries later, Kavirāja, importing the *śleṣa* technique to the large canvas of *mahākāvya* so as to create a fully bitextual, coherent poem, identifies himself in this line or path:

> Subandhu, Bāṇa, and Kavirāja are a triumvirate,
> masters of the path of crooked speech.
> Could there ever be a fourth?[24]

Like any historical description, this précis of literary history makes a severe selection—which is the point of the exercise. Kavirāja chooses to draw a direct line between his own work and that of the *śleṣa* prose-masters, bypassing generations

> and the Vindhya Mountains,
> and messages of the rain-filled wind.
> for the verse on Rājaśekhara, see *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1714 (p. 295).

22. *Bālabhārata* 1.12; Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1719. This is not an isolated motif: the Telugu poet Annamayya (fifteenth century) is said to be a reincarnation of Nammāḻvār, the central figure among the Tamil Vaiṣṇava poets.

23. *Vāsavadattā* [with T. V. Srinivasachariar's commentary, 1906], p. 159. For a discussion of this verse and in the context of Subandhu's claim for innovation, see Bronner 2010, 20–25. For more on subandhu's innovations, see Chapter 9.

24. *subandhur bāṇabhaṭṭaś ca kavirāja iti trayaḥ/*
vakrokti-mārga-nipuṇaś caturtho vidyate na vā// Rāghavapāṇḍavīya 1.41.

Cf. Bronner 2010, 126–28.

of *śleṣa* poets such as Nītivarman, Daṇḍin, and Dhanañjaya. This selection positions Kavirāja as the culmination of the line. Precisely the same logic obtains in the introduction to the *Pārvatīrukmiṇīya*, a work modeled on Kavirāja's, by Vidyāmādhava (early thirteenth century):

> Bāṇa, Subandhu, the poet called the "king of poets" (*kavi-rāja*),
> and myself, the great pandit Vidyāmādhava,
> are the four masters of crooked speech in this world.
> There will never be a fifth.[25]

Such series tend to be expansive and open-ended, and the latest voice both imitates his predecessor and hopes to be the last.[26]

B.2. What Poets Say about Their Own Poetry

Sequential contexts like the above may also open up to include much more pointed and detailed comment on the author's innovative program. The same Kavirāja who connects himself to Subandhu and Bāṇa also situates himself in a particular way vis-à-vis Vālmīki and Vyāsa, the authors of the great Sanskrit epics, as is appropriate to a work which embodies and conflates both their epic narratives:

> Vālmīki is the second Creator. The primal poem is his pitcher.
> The story of Rāma is his Ganges water, with which he purifies the world.
> Vyāsa is another Creator. His creation is the *Mahābhārata* ocean.
> His verses are marine gems, adorning the world.
> The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the splendid Ganges. The *Mahābhārata* is the vast ocean.
> Kavirāja, who knows how to join the two, is Bhagīratha.
> Where the charming *Rāmāyaṇa* Ganges mingles with the *Bhārata* ocean,
> there, in the sacred pool of poetry that removes all stains,
> let the wise plunge with joy.[27]

25. *bāṇaḥ subandhuḥ kavirāja-saṃjño vidyā-mahā-mādhava-paṇḍitaś ca/*
vakrokti-dakṣāḥ kavayaḥ pṛthivyāṃ catvara ete na hi pañcamo 'sti// Pārvatīrukmiṇīya 1.15, ms. 11606, Madras Oriental Library, folio 3.

26. This discussion is based on Bronner 2010, esp., 126–28, 234–39.

27. *anyo vidhātā vālmīkir ādi-kāvyaṃ kamaṇḍaluḥ/*
raghunātha-kathā gaṅgā tayā pūtā jagat-trayī//
dvaipayano 'paro brahmā tat-sṛṣṭir bhāratārṇavaḥ/
sūktayo divya-ratnāni trailokyaṃ tair alaṅkṛtam//
śrīmad-rāmāyaṇaṃ gaṅgā bhārataṃ sāgaro mahān/
tat-saṃyojana-kāryajñaḥ kavirājo bhagīrathaḥ//
manojña-rāmāyaṇa-bhāratākhya-bhāgīrathī-sāgara-saṃnipāte/
santaḥ prakurvantv avagāha-līlām asminn agha-cchedini kāvya-tīrthe// Rāghavapāṇḍavīya 1.8–9, 40, 44.
Cf., Bronner 2010, 153–54.

That poetry is a body of water—usually an ocean—is a standard trope (not only in India).[28] Here, however, we have two liquid texts—the two great epics, neatly differentiated: the story of Rāma is a divine, purifying current, refined and well-defined; the *Mahābhārata*, a huge repository of widely varying materials, is the ocean with its hidden gems. The first text, as we know, sees itself as the world's first poem, the second as its most comprehensive. As a model for his own poetic identity, Kavirāja has drawn from Indian mythology the figure of Bhagīratha, who brought these two bodies of water together (he drew the Ganges from heaven to earth in order to fill the pit of the ocean). In the same way, Kavirāja himself simultaneously narrates the two epic stories in his work, the *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya*. The result of this literary fusion is "a sacred pool of poetry that removes all stains"—*kāvya-tīrtha*.

But for our purposes, the deeper point has to do with Kavirāja's entire poetic program. He lucidly sets out in his introduction his twofold poetic lineage: there is the pair of epic poets, Vālmīki and Vyāsa, and their materials, which he has combined by using the techniques initially tested and polished in the prose-laboratories of Subandhu and Bāṇa. This is what he is telling us in his detailed metapoetic framing of the *kāvya*. In effect, he gives his readers a plan of his work, highlighting what is truly new about it.[29]

Such highly specific and detailed metapoetic proclamations are rather rare in Sanskrit *kāvya*. Often more modest or limited statements are prefixed or suffixed to the body of the work. For example, Bhaṭṭi (seventh century) explicitly announces that his poem, which is keyed to grammatical topics embodied in Pāṇinian *sūtra*s, rests upon grammar as its *raison d'être*.

> For those whose eyes have been opened by grammar,
> this work is like a lamp.
> Those without grammar
> will have to grope through it like the blind.[30]

By effectively defining his readership in this way, Bhaṭṭi characterizes his poem in its specificity—as the first in a long series of *śāstra-kāvya*s, that is, poems which also exemplify particular learned disciplines, especially grammar.[31]

Sometimes a poet will underscore his own use of a particular poetic device. We have already seen Subandhu's boast about using bitextuality (in every syllable).

28. *Kāvyādarśa* 1.12. Metrics is the boat to navigate the ocean of poetry. In Latin verse, the usual image is of an unsullied spring.

29. For further discussion, see Bronner 2010: 140–54.

30. *dīpa-tulyaḥ prabandho 'yaṃ śabda-lakṣaṇa-cakṣuṣām/*
hastamarśa ivândhānāṃ bhaved vyākaraṇād ṛte// Bhaṭṭikāvya 22.33

31. Thus Udbhaṭa's *Kumārasambhava* exemplifies *alaṅkāra-śāstra*.

A more nuanced and ramified statement comes from a brief autobiographical comment ascribed to Ratnākara and appended to his *Haravijaya* (ninth-century Kashmir), where he says his words are "teeming with luxuriant *yamaka*s and *śleṣa*s" (*vikaṭa-yamaka-śleṣoddhāra-prabandha-nirargalaḥ*).[32] Moreover, these words have no precedent (*asadṛśa-gatiḥ*) on the map of *citra* poetry (*citre mārge*)—that is, both "variegated" (surprising, flashy) and, more technically, *citra-bandha* or diagrammatic poems, with which his work abounds. Ratnākara then goes on to say:

> He is the best at composing cutting-edge *kāvya*.
> He's a poets' poet. Even where he writes a verse
> that reads in six languages at once, his words are never
> ponderous. He is richly endowed with an inventive mind,
> crystal clear and vibrant, which has reached the limit
> of knowledge. That's me, Ratnākara,
> your poet-laureate.[33]

> There is no topic in the world that gifted poets have been afraid to handle.
> Never let worry about re-using a well-worn subject
> lead you to make your poem opaque.
> Bāṇa was the first of those whose voices matter,
> who proceed boldly but gently.
> Ratnākara, blazing like a fire on earth,
> is the only other.[34]

These two verses, whether they were actually composed by Ratnākara or not, effectively characterize his poetry as (*a*) erudite, (*b*) readable, not too heavy, (*c*) inventive and imaginative, (*d*) dealing with a well-known subject or story—but interesting, even "cutting-edge," despite that, and (*e*) deeply significant (*guru*). The *Haravijaya* is not exactly light reading, but it does, indeed, have a "flowing," often felicitous style. There is also a specific reference to verse 4.35, a

32. *Haravijaya, grantha-kartuḥ praśasti* 2; Smith 1985: 104.

33. *dhārā-kāvya-prabandha-praṇihita-paramaḥ śrotra-peyā kavīnāṃ*
bhāṣā-ṣaṭke 'pi yasya kvacid api na gatā bhāratī bhāravattvam/
prāpta-jñeyâvasāna-sphurad-amalatara-prātibha-jñāna-sampat
so 'haṃ ratnâkaras te sadasi kṛta-padaḥ kṣmāpa vāgīśvarâṅkaḥ // Haravijaya, granthakartuḥ praśastiḥ, 6.

34. *dṛbdhaṃ sat-prajñakair yan na jagati kavibhir vastu tan nâsti kiṃcit*
kṣuṇṇe 'kṣuṇṇatva-cintā gahana-viṣayatā tasya dūrâstu tāvat/
tan mandâbhipragalbha-prasara-guru-girām agraṇīr bāṇa eko
rājan ratnâkaraś ca jvalanavad avanau jājvalīti dvitīyaḥ // Haravijaya, granthakartuḥ praśastiḥ, 7.

tour de force that can be deciphered in six languages (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Māgadhī, Śaurasenī, Apabhraṃśa, and Paiśācī).[35] In addition, Ratnākara addresses head-on the issue of originality, urging poets not to make their works too difficult just because they are afraid of not doing something new. Is this statement, concluding one of the more difficult Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s, ironic or disingenuous? The line itself (*kṣuṇṇe 'kṣuṇṇatva-cintā gahana-viṣayatā tasya dūrâstu tāvat*) may be a deliberate parody of the turgid clumsiness that he claims may result from the misguided fretting of other poets about this very point.[36]

Śrīharṣa in the twelfth century offers his readers a somewhat similar self-portrait, which also constitutes, in effect, a license to read:

> I have deliberately planted knots
> here and there in my book. Those readers
> who think they're so smart,
> who do violence to the text—
> this is no playground for such thugs.
> Do it right.
> First find a teacher you can trust to unjam the knots
> and serve him well.
> Only then can you plunge at will
> into the deep waters of my poetry
> and enjoy it.[37]

There is a prestigious precedent for the notion of placing knots in a book. In the frame-story of the *Mahābhārata*, the author, Vyāsa, is said to have dictated his work to the elephant-headed god, Gaṇeśa, serving as his scribe; but each of the two parties laid down a condition to their partnership. Gaṇeśa demanded that he should never have to slow down his writing because of the pace of the dictation, and Vyāsa agreed on the condition that Gaṇeśa would never record anything he did not understand. In order to gain time, Vyāsa deliberately inserted occasional "knots" (*granthi*)—that is, passages so difficult that even Gaṇeśa had to pause and ponder.[38] For Śrīharṣa, however, there is more to the idea

35. See Smith 1985: 124, referring to *Kāvyālaṅkāra* of Rudraṭa 4.23.

36. *Haravijaya*, verse 7 in the appended verses. We accept the emendation by Smith 1985: 105–106, n. 7.

37. *grantha-granthir iha kvacit kvacid api nyāsi prayatnān mayā*
prājñaṃ-manya-manā haṭhena paṭhitī mâsmin khalaḥ khelatu/
śraddhârāddha-guru-ślathī-kṛta-dṛḍha-granthiḥ samāsādayatv
etat kāvya-rasôrmi-majjana-sukha-vyāsajjanaṃ saj-janaḥ// Naiṣadhamahākāvya 22.152.

38. The passage occurs only in some Northern manuscripts and is excluded from the constituted text in the Critical Edition; see *Mahābhārata*, Vol. 1, pp. 884–885, note on Passage 1 of Appendix 1.

of textual knots. He conceives the tying of knots as a necessary dimension of his process of composing a text, and the untying of these knots as inherent to the reader's activity of engaging with it. The two nearly identical words with which the verse begins express this view: both *grantha*, "textual passage," and *granthi*, "knot," are equated in a single alliterative compound, a *rūpaka-samāsa*; both derive from the same root, *grath*—to tie together, to compose. Knots like these, although they require considerable effort to disentangle, are not meant to be mere obstacles; they are, in fact, opportunities. The reader is not meant to cut through the knot, as in the Gordian variety, but to release the multiple threads so as to allow them to unfold and expand in all their fullness. The difficulty is not an end in itself but an integral part of the aesthetic process—a form of dense concentration of sound and meaning, which only a trained teacher can unravel.

Nearly all historians of Sanskrit literature have failed to see this point. The obvious difficulty of much Sanskrit poetry has generally been viewed as an insuperable flaw or a repellant barrier, blinding such critics to much of what this poetry is about. Dense layering effects, the superimposition of one or more levels on another, complex imagery, establishing relations among superficially discrete entities, subtle suggestion—all these lie at the heart of the Sanskrit poetic enterprise. An explicit statement like Śrīharṣa's, focusing attention on the topos of difficulty, is continuous with implicit, metapoetic notions that are built into Śrīharṣa's text. Indeed, such implicit metapoetic statements are often the most revealing expressions of a poet's self-perception and poetic design.

Observe the structure and plot development in Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīya*, which faithfully follows the *Mahābhārata*'s narration of Nala and Damayantī's falling in love—except for one major departure. At the moment of Damayantī's *svayaṃvara* or bridegroom-choice, when the four gods of the cardinal directions appear before her in the exact guise of her human suitor, Nala, Śrīharṣa introduces a new character. The goddess Sarasvatī—poetry incarnate—makes a guest appearance; it is she who introduces to Damayantī each of the disguised contestants and Nala himself. She does so in a striking series of bitextual (*śliṣṭa*) verses which are so difficult that even Damayantī fails to grasp them at first.[39] It is impossible to regard such verses as either incidental or purely decorative. They are rather the central mechanism at work in the poem, as Śrīharṣa's statement about knots suggests. That *śleṣa* itself amounts to the tying of a knot becomes clear, for example, in Damayantī's reaction to Sarasvatī's bitextual speech: she recognizes, at the end of the process, that her guide is Poetry itself, speaking in bitextual language (*śliṣṭaṃ nigadya*) to tie together (*jagrantha ... vacaḥ-srajaḥ*) garlands of words (initially to Damayantī's great confusion: 14.14–15). Damayantī also recognizes

39. See Malamoud (Chapter 19) in this volume.

that this bewildering, entangled utterance has the potential to reveal a lucid identity, and that it is spoken out of kindness (*mad-anugraheṇa*). In this, Damayantī acts as the prototypical or ideal reader who is meant to disentangle the poet's knots in order to grasp their richness and to enjoy the resulting play of meanings. Śrīharṣa's poetic technique and his imagined audience are both incorporated as characters in his poem.[40]

Such moments are by no means rare in Śrīharṣa or in other Sanskrit poets.[41] Often a poet puts in the mouth of an internal listener what he himself thinks about his work and about poetry in general. Such statements—or the mere existence of Sarasvatī as a central figure in the text—are encoded instructions by the author to his readers. As such, they often tell us just where the author believes he has created something new.

B.3. What People Say about Poets

A vast world of popular stories, anecdotes, and epigrams, orally transmitted but also recorded in medieval works such as the *Bhojaprabandha* and the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, accompanies and comments upon most great Sanskrit poetic works. (This kind of oral literary criticism exists in most living poetic traditions.) Trenchant, pointed observations about individual verses, the distinctive style of particular poets, and the force of specific works abound in this level of the tradition, which also effectively produces versions of a classical literary canon. It has been argued elsewhere that these materials are systemically organized and linked to changing social configurations.[42] Sometimes stories and verses from this stratum also relate to questions of innovation.

Perhaps the best-known example of a focused, differential characterization of major poets is this anonymous *śloka*:

> Kālidāsa has his simile,
> Bhāravi has weighty meaning,
> Daṇḍin, dancing words.
> Māgha has all three.[43]

In each of the first three lines, a poet is accurately linked to a salient feature of his style. Kālidāsa does indeed extend the use of simile beyond anything in his

40. See Bronner 2010, 82–88.

41. See, for example, *Naiṣadhamahākāvya* 3.66–69, where the goose-messenger compliments Damayantī for a bitextual statement which, he says, makes her a *śleṣa-kavi*.

42. See Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998.

43. *upamā kālidāsasya bhāraver artha-gauravaṃ/*
daṇḍiṇaḥ pada-lālityaṃ māghe santi trayo guṇāḥ//

predecessors' works—making his figures complex, sharp, and reflexive. Weightiness of meaning is precisely the feature most people would identify as new in Bhāravi. A special dancing flow of words allows readers or listeners to distinguish Daṇḍin's prose from earlier examples. And what is innovative in Māgha is not the pioneering of any one technique but his combination and intensification of all these earlier elements (and others).

This spirit of rivalry is a topic in many such epigrams, which also create a dense intertextuality characteristic of this type of literary history or criticism. Thus:

> Bhāravi's brilliance shines only until the rise of Māgha.
> Once Māgha has arisen, Bhāravi's brilliance is as dim as the winter sun.[44]

The name Bhāravi means "the shining sun." Māgha is also a winter month. The point of the verse is that Māgha has assimilated everything good in Bhāravi and purposefully striven to outdo it.

The most concise form of popular evaluation nicknames the great poets by prefixing a telling phrase or image to their proper names. These are always shorthand references to a trademark verse illustrating some major stylistic feature associated with this poet.[45] Thus we have "torch-light Kālidāsa" (*dīpa-śikhā-kālidāsa*) after *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.67;[46] "umbrella Bhāravi" (*chattra-bhāravi*) after *Kirātārjunīya* 5.39; and "Māgha of the bells" (*ghaṇṭā-māgha*) after *Śisupālavadha* 4.20. The image referred to in the latter sobriquet lies at the heart of the section in Māgha's work that elaborately expands the figurative and phono-aesthetic techniques that he has borrowed from Bhāravi and others (see Tubb, Chapter 7, in this volume).

Perhaps most revealing of all are the stories that poems write about their authors, like the *asti kaścid vāg-viśeṣaḥ* narrative with which we began. Such stories habitually embody critical perspectives, including articulations of ambivalence and tension, on individual authors and their works. They also frequently mark a turning point in literary culture and map out geographical, social, and

44. *tāvad bhā-bhāraver bhāti yāvan māghasya nôdayaḥ/*
udite ca punar māghe bhāraver bhā-raver iva//
Another version of the second line: *udite naiṣadhe kāvye kva māghaḥ kva ca bhāraviḥ/* "Once the *Naiṣadhiya* appeared, who cared about Māgha and Bhāravi?" (*Naiṣadhamahākāvya*, p. 6 in Haragovinda Śāstrī's introduction).

45. Despite Lienhard 1984: 35, who maintains that these epithets are chosen simply to refer to isolated images. There are also epithets that refer to some trait of the author's poetry that seem to have become proper names—for example, Utprekṣā-vallabha; Kavi-rākṣasa.

46. Also *dhūma-kālidāsa*, after *Raghuvaṃśa* 7.43; see Shulman (Chapter 2) in this volume.

political conflicts active within the literary system. At the same time, such stories almost invariably compose verses that accurately mimic the style of the poet whose life they are describing, thus offering another reflexive perspective on the corpus of the poet in question. We might note that the sense these stories often convey is of a ferocious and rather dangerous literary scene, in which poets constantly vie for recognition, and in which failure amounts to lifelong shame.

To take one particularly rich example focused, again, on Śrīharṣa: The *Prabandhakośa* of Rājaśekhara Sūri (mid-fourteenth century) tells us that this poet was urged by his dying father, Hīra, to take revenge on a pandit who had humiliated Hīra in debate:

Śrīharṣa transferred the burden of the family to trustworthy relatives and went abroad, and he received in most vibrant form, at the feet of various professors and over a long time, all the knowledges—logic, poetics, music, mathematics, astronomy, the Cuḍāmaṇi mantra, grammar, etc. He practiced the Cuḍāmaṇi mantra, given to him by a good guru, on the bank of the Ganges for a full year; the goddess Tripurā became visible to him, and he received boons such as unfailing instruction.

Then he began to wander through the literary assemblies of kings. He spoke in a way that reached the pinnacle of extraordinary eloquence, such that no one could understand him. Then, depressed by his knowledge which, extreme as it was, passed beyond the scope of people, he made the goddess Bhāratī visible to him and said, "Mother, my excessive intellect has become a liability for me. Make me one whose speech can be understood by people." The Goddess said, "In that case, wet your head with water in the middle of the night and drink yogurt, then sleep. Because of the partial descent of phlegm you will obtain a modicum of dullness."[47]

He did so, and he became one whose speech can be understood. He composed more than a hundred works, such as the *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya*. Having accomplished his goals, he travelled to Kāśī. Stopping at the edge of the city, he informed King Jayantacandra, "I have studied and come back." The king, being fond of quality, made a tour around the city with all four castes, together with the pandit who had defeated his father, Hīra. Śrīharṣa was saluted, and he himself

47. *Prabandhakośa* p. 55. Other versions of the story say that Śrīharṣa, while still a young boy, was told to eat a certain kind of beans in order to dull his mind, in the hopes that he could then be understood. His uncle (Mammaṭa?) passed by as the boy was eating and asked him what he was doing, so Śrīharṣa said: *aśeṣa-śemuṣī-muṣi-māṣān āśnāmi mātula*, "I am assiduously assimilating legumes lethargetic to intellection." The uncle said: "Eat some more."

gave the customary greetings to everyone according to their due. And he praised the king as follows:

> Young women, do not think this king is Kāma
> because he is Govinda's son
> and because of his bodily beauty.
> The God of Love merely makes women his weapon
> in conquering the world,
> but this king turns armed men into women.[48]

And he proclaimed many beautiful things in a loud voice. The court and the king were pleased. But when he saw the debater who was his father's opponent, he said, with a sidelong glance,

> Whether in a delicate work of poetry,
> or in a tangled and knotted work on logic,
> when I'm creating, Sarasvatī plays along with me.
> Whether on a bed covered with a soft blanket,
> or on the ground strewn with prickly grass,
> if a woman loves her man, she's always happy to make love.[49]

At this, the dumbfounded opposing pandit submitted instantly.

This is not the end of the story, but we should pause to observe certain salient features. Śrīharṣa embodies what is apparently a new poetic ideal. He is not simply an inspired poet but also an immensely learned pandit, a *kavi-paṇḍita* (the title the king eventually bestows upon him). In fact, Śrīharṣa's panditry precedes his poetic initiation in this story; the role of the goddess is to poeticize his towering—indeed, overpowering—intellect. As stated earlier, Śrīharṣa is famous for his dauntingly complicated style and erudite vocabulary. The goddess bestows two nearly opposite boons on Śrīharṣa—on the one hand, extreme cultural virtuosity, and on the other, a technique for toning it down in the interest of becoming intelligible to others. Recalling our earlier discussion, we could say that she gives him the ability to tie knots that others will be able (not without

48. *govinda-nandanatayā ca vapuḥ-śriyā ca*
mâsmin nṛpe kuruta kāma-dhiyaṃ taruṇyaḥ/
astrī-karoti jagatāṃ vijaye smaraḥ strīr
astrī-janaḥ punar anena vidhīyate strī // Prabandhakośa, verse 153, p. 55.

49. *sāhitye sukumāra-vastuni dṛḍha-nyāya-graha-granthile*
tarke vā mayi saṃvidhātari samaṃ līlāyate bhāratī/
śayyā vāstu mṛdûttaracchadavatī darbhâṅkurair āstṛtā
bhūmir vā hṛdayaṃ-gamo yadi patis tulyā ratir yoṣitām // Prabandhakośa verse 154, p. 55.

considerable effort) to untie. Indeed, this language of knots appears pointedly again in the verse Śrīharṣa improvises in the presence of the king and his father's nemesis.

Note the poet's bold assertion of command over Sarasvatī herself. She plays along with him according to his will; and she also is, by implication, madly in love with him. As we know, one of the greatest innovations of the *Naiṣadhīya* is the introduction of Sarasvatī as a character in the Nala story; the poet is perfectly capable of controlling her in this way and confident that she will play the role that he writes for her. Clearly, the model of poetic inspiration has shifted; the asymmetrical dependence of the poet on his Muse, as we see in earlier texts, has given way to a new relation. This poet is sure he can make his Muse look good. However, a certain ambivalence remains, for the story goes on to tell us how, when Śrīharṣa had completed the *Naiṣadhīya* (at his king's behest), he was told to take the work to Kashmir and to present it there for Sarasvatī's approval. When he places the written text in the hand of the goddess, she tosses it away. Angry and insulted, he says to her: "Have you become palsied with old age, that you despise even a work by me, as if it were a work by just anyone?" She replies by calling him a "tattletale" (*marma-bhāṣaka*), citing a verse of his in which, she claims, he has revealed her innermost secrets. But truth is a defense against libel, as he points out, and she concedes; the implication is that this poet has, indeed, seen into her inner being. She thus approves the poem and his activation of her within it. We find the epithet she uses, *marma-bhāṣaka*, telling. In our terms, it is a concise, precise description of the mechanism of the poetic knot, which always contains within it a hidden space, *marman*, where the vital inner nature of things and the true identity of characters lie ready to be unfolded.

So the story recognizes and highlights Śrīharṣa's innovative cast of characters, knotty style, arcane diction, vast learning, and also the ambivalence with which his work was initially received. In addition, the story also comments on the social and cultural background of medieval Sanskrit poetry. Even with Sarasvatī's approval, the Kashmiri pandits refuse to present the *Naiṣadhīya* to their king. As mentioned earlier, the world in which Kashmiri Sanskrit *kāvya* was produced was one of intense competition, including monopolistic claims by rival sections of the elite. Eventually, Śrīharṣa manages by persistence and intellectual displays to overcome their recalcitrance and returns home in triumph—only to face further court intrigue in Kāśī. In the end he renounces the world, and his departure coincides with the capture of the city by Muslim invaders—a juxtaposition that agrees with the general view of Śrīharṣa as having represented a high point of Sanskrit literary culture from a moment shortly before one of its major centers of production collapsed.

This story, like the poem it contextualizes, has a complex and comprehensive quality. All the major themes and elements of such narratives appear framed, above all, by a strong critical focus specific to this work. This focus is clear in the verses that the story puts into Śrīharṣa's mouth, which nicely mimic Śrīharṣa's style. Such verses sometimes find their way into anthologies, where they are naturally attributed to the imitated poets.[50] These ascriptions are further evidence of an awareness within the literary culture of the distinctive and innovative voices of its major poets.

B.4. What Professionals Say about Poets

What about the huge corpus of theoretical and analytical discussions about literature in Sanskrit? Can we afford to ignore Śrīharṣa's advice to his readers to "first find a teacher you can trust"? What do Sanskrit critics and theorists have to say about innovation?

The Sanskrit intellectual tradition in general, from its beginnings, presupposes the existence and importance of explicit commentary.[51] *Kāvya* texts are no less in need of such commentary than expository treatises. So universal is this assumption that Bhāmaha, one of the early *ālaṅkārika*s, tells us a *mahākāvya*, while rich in content, should not require *too* extensive a commentary (*nâtivyākhyeyam ṛddhimat* [*mahākāvyam*], *Kāvyālaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha, 1.20). Poets make the same assumption: thus Bhaṭṭi concludes his work with the statement that it requires a commentary to be understood (*vyākhyā-gamyam idaṃ kāvyam, Bhaṭṭikāvya* 22.34).

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish two major types of commentators on *kāvya*, aiming at two distinct audiences. The most often read commentaries, like those of Mallinātha and Vallabha, are meant for schoolboys. They focus on elementary technical analysis, usually one verse at a time—although, as with any textbook, we can distinguish levels and stages. Thus Mallinātha's commentary on *Raghuvaṃśa* is a primary-level text, concentrating on grammar, for beginners; his commentary on *Kumārasambhava* is for intermediate students more familiar with *alaṅkāra-śāstra* terminology; however, his notes on *Kumārasambhava* 8, preceded by a separate introduction, are meant for advanced students who have studied *rasa* theory.[52] Such commentaries are basically lecture-notes or

50. See Bronner on Bilhaṇa (Chapter 17) in this volume.

51. *Mahābhāṣya* (first interpretive rule): *vyākhyānato viśeṣa-pratipattir na hi sandehād alakṣaṇam*, "An understanding of specifics is derived from explanation, because lack of understanding is not evidence for lack of definite teaching." In other words: find a good commentator. *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya* 1.6–7.

52. See Tubb 1986.

transcriptions of oral, classroom instruction. Still today, as in medieval India, we depend on these commentaries as indispensable tools for understanding the poems and the cultural world that produced them. Occasionally, such commentaries also present us with incisive critical comments as well as verses praising individual poets and short narratives along the lines that we have seen; they are also our main source for the nicknames mentioned above. However, a second group of commentaries, somewhat less widely read, presumes a more sophisticated readership; they often ignore the more pedestrian, technical points, which they take for granted, and instead focus on more difficult issues and give more attention to larger structures and themes. At times relatively elaborate introductions serve, in effect, as critical essays in their own right. Among the prominent names in this category are Aruṇagirinātha, Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita, Citrabhānu, Arjunavarmadeva, and Vemabhūpāla.

For example, Aruṇagirinātha, in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, puts emphasis on "the special identities of the hero and heroine in the *Kumārasambhava* as the underlying reasons for the unorthodox focus of the plot."[53] In effect, he is commenting on the refashioning of the old martial *mahākāvya* by Kālidāsa as a spiritual love-poem. He also addresses issues of allegory, artistic goals, structure, and aesthetic propriety; and he is interested in the applicability of *rasa* theory to the *Kumārasambhava* and, specifically, in how *rasa* can be sustained over a long passage. Such broader reflections often focus attention on features of the poem that are recognizably new.

In a sense, such commentators, concerned with practical criticism, occupy a middle space between the poets and the hard-core theorists of the *alaṅkāra* tradition. As in any complex literary culture, it is far from clear that the dominant poetic theories actually theorize real poetic practice. Poetic theory is driven largely by internal concerns for consistency and the burden of its long history as well as by developments in other, neighboring disciplines. Moreover, many aspects of poetic practice are ignored by the *ālaṅkārika* treatises, including the emergence of new genres, larger structural patterning, issues of plot and character development, notions of subjectivity, syntactical and metrical expressivity, and so on. However, the authors of the treatises had a detailed knowledge of the entire corpus of Sanskrit poetry that is no longer possible, and they do make incisive and illuminating comments on specific passages and works (often through the examples they select to illustrate particular figures or points). Moreover, there are moments when the *śāstra* suddenly opens up and articulates powerful critical perceptions that are rooted in more theoretical concerns.

53. Tubb 1984, 232.

One such moment was Ānandavardhana's revolutionary analysis of suggestion, the *Dhvanyāloka*, from the mid-ninth century. Ānandavardhana argues that all his predecessors overlooked the main purpose of poetry, indeed its very soul; and this claim "leads him to adopt a more empirical approach to literary analysis, quoting and discussing the works of earlier poets far more frequently and thoroughly than any of his predecessors had done."[54] It is thus of some interest, in the present context, that Ānandavardhana, after a long chapter replete with focused critical observations in the light of his theory, chooses to end his book with a meditation on *navatva*, "newness" (*Dhvanyāloka* 4.2).

His assumption is that poetry, although it nearly always describes what has already been described, has to do so in a fresh manner if it is to be any good. The entire fourth and final chapter of the *Dhvanyāloka* is suffused with a latent anxiety about triteness and repetitiveness. "A subject, if it has a truly distinct soul, even if it conforms to a configuration used before, glows like the face of a pretty girl, which poets compare to the moon."[55] This *kārikā* picks up brilliantly on the *Dhvanyāloka*'s opening claim to have successfully identified the soul, *ātman*, of poetry as *rasa-dhvani*, in contrast to the more external elements which constitute its body and ornaments; the latter lack intrinsic beauty but are, rather, dependent upon the vital presence of a true soul. It is this soul that makes freshness possible time and again. Almost by definition, a woman's face in a Sanskrit poem resembles the moon. Still, each such face has its own particular beauty that emerges from the irreducible inner liveliness of the person.

An earlier verse in this same chapter states the mechanism of "newness" very directly:

> Things that poetry describes—
> we've seen them time and again,
> and still they all seem new
> if they are nourished by *rasa*,
> like trees in spring.[56]

The image is slightly different from the earlier point about faces and the moon; here the sense is of a cyclical renewal that each year, and each poem, produces.

54. McCrea 2008, 220–32. This new attention to practical criticism is also prominent in a few works provoked by Ānandavardhana's treatise, including Mahima Bhaṭṭa's *Vyaktiviveka* and, in a very different mode, Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*.

55. *ātmano 'nyasya sad-bhāve pūrva-sthity-anuyāyy api /*
vastu bhātitarāṃ tanvyāḥ śaśi-cchāyam ivānanam// Dhvanyāloka 4.14.

56. *dṛṣṭa-pūrvā api hy arthāḥ kāvye rasa-parigrahāt/*
sarve navā ivâbhānti madhu-māsa iva drumāḥ// Dhvanyāloka 4.4.

It all depends on *rasa*—both the liquid renewal of trees and the same "soul" of poetry that is at the center of Ānandavardhana's thought. The relatively limited stock inventory of poetic topics has always been there—indeed, Ānanda tells us elsewhere that if these conventions were all there was to poetry, then Vālmīki, the first poet, would also be the last—but the ways of dealing with these topics, in the *rasa*-oriented universe, are literally infinite, as Ānanda says in introducing the above verse.[57] Real poetry, that is, poetry rich in *rasa* (including suggestion), thus "fulfills the role of springtime," as Abhinavagupta explains in his comment.[58]

It should be noted that Ānanda offers no detailed analysis of "newness" per se. In fact, his main purpose in this final section is to appropriate the shared goal of innovation and to assimilate it to his overarching theory of *rasa-dhvani*. If something is beautiful, it is only because of its soul; the external elements of poetry, its body and ornaments, do not in themselves contribute to the aesthetic experience. And it is precisely at this point that we wish to break free. Although we agree with Ānanda that *kāvya*, like a kaleidoscope, has the potential for infinitely regenerating itself from a relatively limited set of basic forms, we think his focus on the single aspect of poetic suggestion cannot suffice to illuminate the problem of change.

Indeed, some of the earliest reactions to the *Dhvanyāloka*, within the same geographical and cultural sphere that produced it, make a similar point. Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*, produced in Kashmir within a hundred years of Ānandavardhana, also ends with a fourth chapter on the issue of "freshness." But in contrast to Ānandavardhana, Kuntaka's focus is on the way the great works of Sanskrit poetry display innovation in the domain of poetic techniques, not of a single overarching criterion or principle.[59] Kuntaka tells us that *vakratā*, that peculiar "twist" that makes poetry poetic, derives from or utilizes innovative techniques

57. *tad itthaṃ rasa-bhāvâdy-āśrayeṇa kāvyârthānām ānantyaṃ supratipāditam*. Metaphysical notions infuse this seemingly simple statement. See Ingalls' note on this issue:

'What is notable here is that the variety of suggestiveness is placed outside the human mind; it is the cause, not the result of poetic imagination. It is as though our authors thought of the objects of the world as existing in a pattern which rendered them amenable to mutual suggestions when viewed by a great poet. The poet's imagination, in this view, would be the medium, not the primary cause, of the creation of new worlds. The worlds would be already there through the magic which underlies *dhvani*' (Ingalls et al., 1990: 681).

58. *kāvyaṃ madhu-māsa-sthānīyam*. For the translation of Abhinavagupta's comment, see Ingalls et al. 1990: 689.

59. As McCrea 2008, 336–45 has shown, Kuntaka's emphasis on *vakrokti* as a general tag is more an exploration of numerous possibilities than an attempt to assimilate everything to a unified and coherent theory.

(*nūtanôpāya, Vakroktijīvita* 4.26). His entire book stands out in the history of the *alaṅkāra-śāstra* precisely because of his open-eyed, sensitive readings of individual verses and works, in a manner relatively free of doctrine.

These two voices, of Ānanda and of Kuntaka, could be said to embody two analytically distinct perspectives on innovation from within the *alaṅkāra* world. One sees freshness *within* the systemic, conventionalized, and coherently theorized world of poetic practice: here it is the same trees that appear new time and again. The other view recognizes that the range of themes employed by Sanskrit poets is no less open to change than the poetic techniques the poets have applied: the forest may surprise us with new species of trees.

Ānandavardhana's point is important in its own right. Consequential innovation within a system of seemingly limited and conventionalized topics figures conspicuously throughout the whole history of the tradition. However, Ānanda, in effect, only pretends that everyone uses the same topics, since he wants to show that his principle of *rasa-dhvani* is what allows the treatment of these topics to appear fresh in every new instance. There are, however, other ways to describe the same phenomenon of innovation within a limited set. Indeed, the structure of the *alaṅkāra* figurative system as a whole—which Ānanda claims to be a somewhat superficial realm—can also serve as a framework for the exposition of such novelty. Medieval thinkers such as Vidyācakravartin, commenting on Ruyyaka's *Alaṅkārasarvasva*, show how numerous figurative and propositional structures may all stem from and elaborate on a single convention—for example, the resemblance of face and moon. The basic fact of similitude ramifies luxuriously into almost the entire range of poetic expressivity as embodied by the rich series of logically distinct figures.[60]

The second perspective, which attends to unconventional novelty suddenly entering the system on all levels, takes many forms. The most obvious, indeed almost trivial example has to do with the fact that faces do not necessarily resemble the moon or a lotus. What about the shaven chin of the Hun that looks like the skin of an orange? New choices of subject matter and new comparisons appear abundantly in *kāvya*, as *ālaṅkārika*s are well aware.[61] Then there is the invention of new figures (and of theoretical categories in general), which at times, though by no means always, clearly reflects an innovation in practice. One well-known example is Rudraṭa's introduction of the figure *vakrokti* and of the practice of *bhāṣā-śleṣa*, bilingual punning, reflecting new features in Ratnākara's

60. Vidyācakravartin on Ruyyaka 11 (p. 36). Cf. Appayya Dīkṣita, *Citramīmāṃsā* 33–35, who quotes this passage. For more on this, see Bronner 2010, 250–54.

61. *sadyo-muṇḍita-matta-hūṇa-cibuka-praspardhi-nāraṅgakam/* See Appayya Dīkṣita, *Citramīmāṃsā* 66–68.

two famous works, *Vakroktipañcāśikā* and *Haravijaya*.[62] Some have even argued that Ānanda's *dhvani* theory emerged as a response to a new kind of poetry, in particular the *Amaruśataka* and Prakrit love-poetry, and a supposedly "de-sophisticated" devotional verse of post-classical Sanskrit poets (we do not subscribe to this view).[63] At any rate, many other examples exist of theoretical categories emerging from innovative practice.

Theory can also take note of innovations on a bigger scale. Kuntaka, who furnishes us with an unusual number of fresh critical perceptions, shows us how Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* in effect encapsulates the entire epic and at the same time refines its narrative by condensing it into a single, well-chosen episode.[64] It is perhaps not a coincidence that Kuntaka chose Bhāravi as his example for this technique; there is a clear contrast with Ānanda's insistence that the whole point of the *Mahābhārata* lies in the disillusionment conveyed by its sad ending.[65] In fact, Kuntaka's perception is persuasive and touches upon a feature central to many later *mahākāvya*s, one possibly pioneered by Bhāravi.

Another large-scale innovation occasionally noticed by *ālaṅkārika*s is the emergence of new genres. Thus Bhoja, in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, describes the nascent *dvi-sandhāna* poetry (works aiming at two narratives simultaneously) and exemplifies the new genre with reference to Daṇḍin's lost double epic and Dhanañjaya's extant one, among others.[66] However, the rise of prominent new literary forms—such as *sandeśa-kāvya*, social satires like Kṣemendra's short works, historical *mahākāvya*s, and Jayadeva's lyrical song-sequence, the *Gītagovinda*—is not usually theorized by the *śāstra*. It is worth asking ourselves why this was the case, given the tremendous expansion of the ecology of genres in medieval Sanskrit.

Without pursuing this theme further, we can at least state that the *alaṅkāra* tradition often recognized the unique achievements of individual poets, referring to them either directly or indirectly. Moreover, the poeticians' choice of examples for particular categories may sometimes be a tribute to salient stylistic features that suggest an awareness of change. In the works of later *ālaṅkārika*s such as Appayya Dīkṣita, we see massive expansion in the inclusion of exemplary verses that combine more recent voices with canonical classics. We should also

62. *Kavyālaṃkāra* of Rudraṭa 2.14–17, 4.10–23. For a discussion of the *Vakroktipañcāśikā*, see Bronner and McCrea 2001.

63. For this view, see Gerow 1971, 80; 1977, 251–52. For a refutation of this view, see McCrea 2008, 12–18.

64. *Vakroktijīvita* 4.19; cf. Bronner 2010: 75–82.

65. *Dhvanyāloka* 4.

66. *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, pp. 492–94, 740. For a discussion of these early bitextual works, see Bronner 2010, 99–121.

mention the medieval *kavi-śikṣā* manuals which provide practical aids to poets and which overlap with similar treatises in areas such as lexicography, metrics, and *rasa* presentation. These works are naturally closely related to the ongoing, evolving practice of professional poets and commentators.

C. What Is New about This Book

Any attempt to historicize a literary tradition—certainly one as vast and varied as Sanskrit *kāvya*—will fall short if it contents itself with observations of newness seen in isolation. Moments of unconventional creativity may well go unnoticed and leave no impact. Innovation is significant in historical terms when it changes the story. For this to happen, for a new twist in the plot to emerge, a new readership and new modes of reception must emerge with new protocols of reading. The history of any literature is in some sense the history of these evolving protocols. But not all innovations are born equal. We have rarely but most significantly the breaking open of new paths in a way that produces novel paradigms for future poets. This is the kind of literary revolution without which no literature can sustain itself for long.[67] Then there are secondary elaborations along such a path, some of them highly original in their own right. And there are also innovations that signify the end of a particular vein of creativity and lead no further. Maybe all this sounds obvious—but the history of Sanskrit *kāvya* has yet to be written.

This book, however, is not a history of Sanskrit *kāvya*. We may be generations away from such a work. Moreover, by no means are all moments of truly consequential innovation in this tradition addressed or even noticed in the following essays. What we hope to offer is a series of pilot studies, sometimes the first serious interpretative essays on major *kāvya* works such as Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* or Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīya*, arranged in a roughly chronological sequence that highlights structural, stylistic, thematic, and generic breakthroughs. Some of the essays present wide-angle panoramas of the evolution of parallel traditions that interacted creatively with Sanskrit literary models: for example, classical Javanese *Kakawin*, medieval Tibetan *kāvya*, and early modern poetry in Brajbhasha. Within this rather polyphonic chorus, representing voices from nearly two millennia in large parts of Asia, fragments of a central narrative are nonetheless manifest. These fragments tend to cluster around a major, extended moment of creativity in Kanauj and its surrounding regions and, more specifically, around the crucial figure of Bāṇa.

67. As discussed by Narayana Rao 1978.

Parts 4 and 5, at the heart of this volume—"The Masters of Prose" and "The Sons of Bāṇa"—explore what went into and came out of the Kanauj school, and accompany some of those who traveled this poetic highway, even "long after Bāṇa walked it every day." The previous two parts—"Kālidāsa and the Early Classicism" and "Bhāravi and Māgha—examine two earlier formative moments that produced the initial masterpieces of the Sanskrit literary canon. The last two parts—"Poets of the New Millennium" and "Regional Kāvya"—trace the further reaches of this canon and extend the discussion of innovations and turning points into a new South Asian world which Sanskrit now shares with the crystallizing regional traditions. Each of the six parts of this volume is introduced by a short introduction that describes the individual papers in the context of that section's period and main objectives. Thus, we will forgo here the customary inventory of essays.

Instead, we would like to conclude this introductory essay with an example that integrates some of the diagnostic features for innovation we have called attention to in the world of *kāvya*. This example emerges from our special attention to the Kanauj moment and, more specifically, from Gary Tubb's work on Bāṇa. Indeed, it involves one of Bāṇa's most famous and popular verses, as found in the introduction to his *Harṣacarita*:

namas tuṅga-śiraś-cumbi-candra-cāmara-cārave/
trailokya-nagarârambha-mūla-stambhāya śambhave//

Homage to him,
beautiful with the chowrie
of the crescent moon
kissing his high head,
to the one Pillar
put in place at the founding of the city
that is the universe—
to Śambhu.

The external political context is the crucial moment of empire-building by Bāṇa's patron, Harṣa, the subject of the work. The choice of imagery is suited to this grand moment: Śiva is the cosmic pillar; the universal city parallels the universal empire. At the top of this pillar, the poet visualizes the telling detail, historically accurate, of a hanging chowrie, analogous to the crescent moon on the head of the god. A realistic observation, precisely articulated and new in itself, becomes functional in the assimilation of a royal insignia to the iconographic description of the god. The image of the foundation pillar is appropriate not only to the opening of a long work and to that work's theme of empire-building but also to

the inauguration of a new genre, that of prose biography. The language of the verse is similarly innovative: notice Bāṇa's characteristic use of long compounds for particular purposes as set against the pointed employment of short words. Of the four words in the poem, the outer two provide the basic sentence structure (homage to Śambhu), while the inner two are long compounds—the first presenting a strong visual image, the second revealing its significance. Also characteristic of Bāṇa is the striking phonological texture of the verse in which the two lines rhyme and carry very prominent but distinct patterns of alliteration. All this is summed up in what the tradition has recognized as a "boldness" of style (*prāgalbhya*), an enduring complex of features pioneered by Bāṇa and pursued in various ways by many of his successors. It is the integrated combination of these features, among others, here deployed in the context of a highly charged political moment, that struck Bāṇa's followers as constituting a style that was new, exciting, and worthy of emulation. The same interweaving of meaningful elements allows us to speak, in our terms, of a turning point, epitomized by this one short but perfect verse.

Not every verse is emblematic or iconic to this extent. Indeed, not every verse stands at the foundation of a new literary era. But every verse has highly specific contours in the cultural architecture of its time and place. What is true of the individual verse is even more true of the complex, elaborated works of the pathbreaking masters. We have, as a matter of principle, attempted to draw in the linkages between the artistic event and its multiple cultural frames and to see the tradition as an organic entity that, contrary to the received wisdom, never ceased boldly to reinvent itself.

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II

Kālidāsa and Early Classicism

It is difficult to know how Sanskrit *kāvya* begins. One of the mysteries pertaining to the origins of this world is that virtually all of the earliest surviving texts appear to be playing against a more straightforward model that is preserved only in works from a much later period. In the case of great poems, or *mahākāvya*s, the presumed model focuses on a military campaign. But, as Gary Tubb demonstrates, the early grand poems by Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa are about spiritual triumphs. In the case of Aśvaghoṣa's two poems, the hero of the *Buddhacarita*, the Buddha, is a powerful alternative to the traditional heroic model, while the title character of the *Saundarananda* is a kind of antihero. As for Kālidāsa's pair of *mahākāvya*s, the heroine is, in effect, the hero of one, and in the other, the title character is an entire lineage of kings.

Having said that, it is important to stress that Aśvaghoṣa still provides us with two sustained and thematically coherent *mahākāvya*s, the first two exemplars we have. Together with Kālidāsa's works they form the foundation of one of the world's most longstanding and richest traditions. Of course, we need to bear in mind that this foundation was originally much stronger. We know the names of early poets whose works have been lost (Bhartṛmeṇṭha, Bhāsa, Mātṛceta); in the case of Aśvaghoṣa himself,

only fragments have survived from two or three plays that he composed, and approximately a half of the *Buddhacarita* has reached us only in Tibetan and Chinese translations. The partial nature of our knowledge calls for caution when we reconstruct the tradition's history. It is entirely possible that the predominant genre for early *kāvya* production was the stage play (*nāṭaka*). None of the essays in this section actually deal with early plays in any depth (although in later sections major exemplars by Bhavabhūti, Rājaśekhara, Murāri, Bilhaṇa, Kavikarṇapūra, and Viswanatha Satyanarayana are analysed and explored).

Another lacuna in our knowledge has to do with the location—geographical, social, and institutional—of *kāvya* production. It is eminently clear that some sort of courtly context was a major factor in the invention and promotion of large-scale *kāvya*-style texts, as Pollock has famously argued in relation to the Śaka polities of western India in the early centuries CE. Herman Tieken, in his contribution here, argues for even deeper courtly roots and links the origins of *kāvya* to the Maurya chanceries of the third century BCE. Tieken adduces as evidence specific structural features in surviving early *kāvya*s—his focus is on the opening passages of these works, whether plays, narrative poems, or anthologies of individual verses—in order to hypothesize about the manner in which they were read and performed.

With Kālidāsa we come to a figure viewed throughout much of the later Sanskrit tradition as the first and greatest of its poets. Despite this consensus, however, there seem to be few serious attempts to address any of his major *kāvya* works as an integrated thematic whole. The essays by Tubb and Shulman in this section offer interpretations of *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvaṃśa* respectively, in the light of the theological and philosophical issues worked through in these texts. The working assumption in both the essays is that, contrary to common supposition, each of these works is a finished masterpiece, unified in theme and style, lyrical in tone, and marked by distinctive features immediately identifiable by any sensitive reader. The papers seek to formulate such features analytically and to explore Kālidāsa's highly personal voice. In fact, one of the themes unifying both works is the immense difficulty inherent in the production of a new beginning: a son to Śiva and Pārvatī in the *Kumārasambhava*, and an heir in every generation in the *Raghuvaṃśa*. To the extent that every great work of literature is also about literature itself, these masterpieces, as explored through the essays in this section, can be seen as statements, in Kālidāsa's highly personal voice, about the mystifying problem of beginning and innovation.

2

Waking Aja

David Shulman

A. Theme as Frame

Simplicity, clarity, a certain sustained "sweetness" or elegance (*lalitodgāra*)[1] of style and diction—we are used to characterizing Kālidāsa in such terms, at once undeniable and largely meaningless. Oral literary criticism adds the only slightly more helpful insistence on Kālidāsa's gift for *upamā*, (simile).[2] Beyond this statement, the South Indian *cāṭu* (oral) tradition offers many pointed observations about Kālidāsa's style, which we would do well to take seriously. No doubt each of us has his or her own Kālidāsa, and our everyday experience of the texts themselves must also count for something. Thus the first professor of Sanskrit at Andhra University, C. Kunhan Raja, is said to have articulated the following principle for establishing the authenticity of a Kālidāsa verse attested in memory or manuscript: if you give the verse to a student who knows some Sanskrit and he reads it three times and understands it, then it is genuine Kālidāsa.[3] On balance, I think this method may have its merits.[4]

1. *Sūktimuktāvali* 4.60.

2. *upamā kālidāsasya bhāraver artha-gauravam/ naiṣadhe pada-lālityaṃ māghe santi trayo guṇāḥ//*

In fact, if we had to opt for one characteristic figure, *alaṅkāra*, for this poet, the choice might fall on *arthântara-nyāsa*.

3. My thanks to Dr K.A. Krishnamacharyulu of Andhra University for this anecdote.

4. For text-critical studies of *Raghuvaṃśa*, see Goodall 2001.

Still, the corpus is surely large enough, and internally consistent enough, in many obvious ways, for us to say something coherent about this poetic voice—allowing, of course, for the genre division between *nāṭaka* (plays) and (*mahā-*) *kāvya*. As to the latter, we will probably have to hold in abeyance Daṇḍin's well-known definition of *sargabandha* (large-scale composition).[5] Sunrises, landscapes, the passing and onset of the seasons, water games, wars, weddings, the birth of princes—we have them all in *Raghuvaṃśa*, just as Daṇḍin would lead us to expect; yet this list tells us almost nothing about what the great text is attempting or achieving.[6] In fact, our understanding of the workings of *mahākāvya* in general is still very limited and conventional. There is no escaping an empirical, inductive exploration of each text taken on its own merits. Naturally, this means looking at the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole, including its possibly truncated ending.

Since we are seeking regularities, we can begin anywhere. The most accessible level is probably the (usually ignored) question of theme. Here Herman Tieken has made an excellent suggestion.

> In a text which is styled a *vaṃśa* (genealogy) the presence of the theme of the continuation of the line is an almost necessary condition. In the *Raghuvaṃśa*, however, this theme features, explicitly and as a serious problem, at the very outset as well as at the very end of the story, thus as it were encompassing or framing the material in between.[7]

That a theme can frame is in itself a useful insight. As Tieken shows, there is a recurrent problem, throughout this text, with "producing sons and heirs."[8] The dynasty that begins with Vaivasvata Manu turns out to be amazingly tenuous in terms of basic continuity. Dilīpa, the first true subject of the poem, has no son and has to resort to serving the wish-granting cow Nandinī in the hope of solving the problem. A rather severe test, which Dilīpa passes with distinction, produces the necessary change of fortune. In the next generation, Dilīpa's hard-won son, Raghu, is also tested: Kautsa, a recent graduate of a full course of study from Varatantu, needs the modest sum of 140,000,000 gold coins to give as *guru-dakṣiṇā* to his teacher. Unfortunately, Raghu has just completed the *viśva-jit* sacrifice, in the course of which he has given away, literally, the entire world (acquired in toto in the *dig-vijaya* [world-conquest] of *sarga* [canto] 4). Thus the king—Kautsa's last hope—is *niḥśeṣa-viśrāṇita-kośa-jāta*, the owner of a treasury

5. *Kāvyādarśa* 1.14–19.

6. It is, of course, not unlikely that Daṇḍin took the *Raghuvaṃśa* as one prototype for his definition.

7. Tieken 1989, 152.

8. Tieken 1989, 153.

that is utterly empty (5.1). The early part of *sarga* 5 shows us how Raghu proceeds toward a solution.

There is a sense in which this moment is emblematic for the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole and, as such, for our understanding of the poet's role in relation to his materials. The *Raghuvaṃśa* is, after all, the story of Raghu's family, a story in which Raghu's paradigm recurs with surprising regularity. The "point" of the paradigm, which ensures what the evolutionary biologists call "reproductive success" under conditions of considerable threat and fragility, is not simply the fact of dynastic continuity. That is the result, continuously replayed, of a consistent logic of action and perception. Kālidāsa actually articulates this logic quite clearly at various points in the poem, for example in 4.86 (describing the *viśva-jit* rite mentioned earlier):

ādānaṃ hi visargāya satāṃ vāri-mucām iva

Good people, like clouds, take in only in order to give out.

For those who like to think of Kālidāsa as embodying an idealized and normative vision of reality and, in particular, of politics, this sentence might encapsulate a theory of kingship—one which is heavily interactive, dynamic, and ultimately homeostatic. Whatever comes in is to be given out; a good king masterminds these exchanges.[9] In my view, in which Kālidāsa's kings are rather darker and less stable, the *arthântara-nyāsa* of 4.86 actually means something slightly different: emptying out, we might say, is here the mode of incipient fullness.[10] Kings—also poets—move through cycles of emptiness and fullness with a certain definable rhythm. Giving away, or giving out, are the mechanism of a miraculous replenishment which has much to do with a sense of potentiality, of existence itself as the realization of a potential, in this sense preexistent, state or form. I note in passing Kālidāsa's penchant, especially in this text, for datives—not merely in the standard sense of goal, purpose, or concern,[11] but rather in what is perhaps the underlying, indeed primary sense of the Sanskrit dative, that of potential or incipient action or intention.[12]

At critical junctures, there is an opening, an emptying out, and then the flicker of continuity, sometimes through verbal blessing (Nandinī to Dilīpa, 2;

9. For similar homeostatic models of kingship, see Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2001.

10. As forgetting is the necessary condition for a deeper remembering in the *Śākuntala*. See Shulman 2001, 182–212.

11. See Renou 1968, 296–99. Note the dative (*bhāvāya prasava-samayâkāṅkṣiṇīnāṃ prajānām*) in 19.57, the final verse of the work.

12. See *Mahābhāṣya* ad 1.4.32; this statement obviously requires a separate study. Cf. *Raghuvaṃśa* 7.71 (*na hi sati kula-dhurye sūrya-vaṃśyā gṛhāya*); 5.13; and so on.

Kautsa to Raghu, 5), sometimes through pathos-driven revelation (the goddess of Ayodhyā to Kuśa, 16), sometimes through the simple, inner bond that seems to connect emptiness with fullness. The strikingly lugubrious tone of so much of this text is intelligible in relation to this pattern; the poet stands within the empty space, mourning what has been lost (sometimes very explicitly, as in Aja's lament for Indumatī in *sarga* 8, or in the extended picture of desolation in *sarga* 16). Out of this emptiness a link dependably emerges, like a lamp lit from another lamp (5.37, describing Aja's birth).[13] The cause gives birth to the effect across a gap. It is, among other things, the poet's business to help negotiate this gap.

Emptying and filling give us one set of images, a particular language well suited to the narrative with its consistent interest in these themes, but there are other ways of speaking about the same process—for example, in terms of contraction and extension (see section C), or as the unfolding or breaking forth (*udbheda*) of a latent, somewhat precarious mode of being (for example, 5.38). The specific images may matter less than the overall pattern. In order to give some sense of the regularities, I want to look briefly at three thematic/syntactic subsets: the poet's interest in emptiness per se; the clear articulation of what I will call the *antara* position; and the notion of breaking, splitting, and scattering, with its accompanying syntactic figures of ellipsis and anacoluthon. I will treat these subsets as exempla, offering various useful or suggestive points of departure for a more integrated and systematic analysis, which I attempt in sections C and D.

B. The Rhythms of Emptying

B.1. Fruitful Nothingness

As already stated, the opening of *sarga* 5 gives us a model statement about what happens when the king's world is entirely emptied out. Kautsa, owing his guru a vast debt, can see immediately from the king's earthern bowl (*arghya-pātra*) that Raghu has expended his entire wealth. Despairing (*svârthopapattiṃ prati durbalâśaḥ*, 5.12), Kautsa finds words to celebrate what Raghu has done:

> *sthāne bhavān eka-narâdhipaḥ sann akiṃcanatvaṃ makha-jaṃ vyanakti/*
> *paryāya-pītasya surair himâṃśoḥ kalā-kṣayaḥ ślāghyataro hi vṛddheḥ//* (16)

13. See discussion later in B3, and the lamp image in 6.67, so striking that it has given Kālidāsa the epithet *dīpa-śikhā-kālidāsa*. Another striking image, in 7.43, provides a rival epithet: *dhūma-kālidāsa*, "smoky Kālidāsa."

How appropriate that you,
the one and only king,
should reveal the nothingness that is yours,
the result of sacrifice!
The waning of the moon, drunk bit by bit
by the gods, is far better
than its waxing full.

This is the royal ideology restated in another *arthântara-nyāsa*; for moons and kings, less is more. "Nothingness", *akiṃcanatva*, deserves praise even if it leaves the Brahmin suppliant empty-handed. Kautsa will, he tells the king, simply have to look elsewhere for help, for "not even the *cātaka* bird [that lives on raindrops] would beg for water from a cloud that has emptied itself of rain" (*nirgalitâmbu-garbhaṃ śarad-ghanaṃ nârdati cātako 'pi*, 17). The analogy of king to cloud with which we began is reinforced.

A venerable antiquity characterizes this idea of giving all in the hopes of receiving all; it is the logic of the Vedic gambler who holds up his ten fingers to show everyone that he has held nothing back (RV 10.34.12). In Raghu's case, of course, it works perfectly. He sets off with his army to subdue Kubera on Mount Kailāsa, and the mere presence—or is it the temerity?—of this king is enough to induce Kubera to rain down gold. So what was empty is now full, just as the deplenished monsoon cloud is thought to soak up the waters of the ocean in order to repeat its generous act. Rewarding Kautsa with millions of gold coins, Raghu is himself rewarded by the Brahmin's blessing that he, Raghu, will have a worthy son. The blessing emerges from, perhaps depends upon, the initial self-deplenishing condition, like the fresh light lit from the flickering wick that has exhausted its oil.

I have described this short passage as paradigmatic; we can trace its career and transformations throughout the poem. When Daśaratha accidentally kills the son of a sage, the latter curses the shaken king to die, too, out of grief for a son—but Daśaratha as yet has no son; hence, as he himself says, the curse that falls on him is mixed with blessing (*śāpo 'py adṛṣṭa-tanayânanapadma-śobhe sânugraho bhagavatā mayi pātito 'yam*, 9.80). In general, the richness or fullness that is drained away or expended (*ātta-sāra*, 5.26), by whatever twists or turns of royal fortune, will be restored out of the very emptiness it leaves behind. Note that Raghu's act of total giving is precisely what defines him, and the dynasty of which he is a part, at the critical juncture of Indumatī's *svayaṃvara* (6.76: Indumatī is told that the father of Aja, with whom she is already falling in love, is that king [Raghu] whose vast wealth, acquired from all the corners of the earth, was contracted into a single clay pot, *catur-dig-āvarjita-saṃbhṛtaṃ yo*

mṛt-pātra-śeṣam akarod vibhūtim). This is not only a matter of kingly riches: look, for example, at 6:7, in the same context where

> *netra-vrajāḥ paura-janasya tasmin vihāya sarvān nṛpatīn nipetuḥ/*
> *madotkaṭe recita-puṣpa-vṛkṣā gandha-dvipe vanya iva dvirephāḥ//*
>
> The dark eyes of the townfolk
> abandoned all the other kings
> and fell upon him (Aja)
> as black bees that have emptied out
> all flowering trees
> alight on a wild elephant.

Emptiness empties into fullness; already Indumatī's choice of Aja is stirring from the potential dimension in which it preexists, though she has not yet seen him. We will observe other examples of this theme in what follows.[14]

B.2. Open Spaces

"Nothingness," *akiṃcanatva*, comes and goes in this text. It is by no means a stable or enduring eventuality. Generally speaking, despite the threnodies it repeatedly generates, "nothingness" is the matrix for some new creative movement—both in terms of narrative and on the microlevels of syntax and figuration (see section C). Such a movement—really a recognizable "rhythm"—implies the existence of a space or gap, the break in sequence that temporarily threatens a break-down of *all* continuity. Sheldon Pollock has studied the corresponding patterns of shattered or staggered syntax in Kālidāsa, noting their normative impact on later Sanskrit poets.[15] Syntactic suspense, *Sperrung*—the delayed, qualified substantive, for instance, frequently separated from its qualifiers by a *yati* break—becomes a standard emphatic device in *kāvya*, its patterns worthy of analysis. In the present context, what is remarkable is the way this notion of hiatus is explicitly thematized in the "*antara* position."[16]

We know it from elsewhere in Kālidāsa—*Kumārasambhava* 8.32, for example:

> *daṣṭa-tāmarasa-kesara-tyajoḥ krandator viparivṛtta-kaṇṭhayoḥ/*
> *nighnayoḥ sarasi cakravākayor alpam antaram an-alpatāṃ gatam//*
>
> Moaning, the *cakravāka*s let the lotus stalks fall
> from their mouths as, helpless, they crane their necks

14. Cf. 16.73: Kuśa's arm is "empty", *śūnya*, of the armlet that, once recovered, brings him Kumudvatī, the *nāginī* who will become his queen and the mother of his son.

15. Pollock 1977.

16. See 12.93.

in backward longing, and the tiny space opening
between them steadily becomes
less tiny.

This delicate verse is dedicated, of course, to the twilight moment (*sandhyā*) that is, by definition, an interval, interesting to the poet as such. Similarly, in *Raghuvaṃśa* 2 we find the rich description of the cow Nandinī's return to the ashram as evening falls—this same cow that was first introduced to us, in 1.83, as being red as Twilight who bears the new white moon (the white curl on Nandinī's forehead). There is, however, a further isomorphism to be explored:

puras-kṛtā vartmani pārthivena pratyudgatā pārthiva-dharma-patnyā/
tad-antare sā virarāja dhenur dina-kṣapā-madhya-gateva sandhyā//

Sent ahead on the path by the king,
welcomed back (to the ashram) by the king's chief wife,
the cow appeared in the gap between these (two)
like Twilight poised between day and night. (2.20)

Nandinī's positioned in the open space between husband and wife (the space that is meant to become fertile as a result of this joint stance: see 2.22) like the temporal gap that comprises a middle moment between light and dark.[17] As others have noted,[18] the implication is that Dilīpa has the blazing force of the sun while Sudakṣiṇā has the gentler quality of night. Kālidāsa's articulation of this vignette is, as usual, lucid and lyrical; still, if we pay close attention we may notice a slight pause at the anaphoric pronominal base *tad-*, following the strong caesura at the end of *pāda* **b**. *Tad-antare* refers back to the two instrumentals of the first line (Mallinātha: *tayor dampatyor madhye*). In effect, the single, integrated sentence hesitates momentarily and then resumes; this *tad* is almost redundant, as the brackets around "two" indicate in my translation. The *antara* position is often one of slight imbalance, though of course the line recovers its smooth flow by the time we reach the finite verb, *virarāja*—rather like the royal line that repeatedly stutters or breaks off, only to resume. Look, however, at the verse that follows immediately upon this one:

pradakṣiṇī-kṛtya payasvinīṃ tāṃ sudakṣiṇā sâkṣata-pātra-hastā/
praṇamya cânarca viśālam asyāḥ śṛṅgântaraṃ dvāram ivârtha-siddheḥ//

Sudakṣinā, a vessel of parched rice in her hands,
circled the fertile cow, bowed her head and offered worship
to the space between her horns—the open door,
one might say, to fulfillment.

17. On middleness, see Handelman and Shulman 2003.
18. Thus Nandargikar in his commentary on this verse.

The space (*antara*) between the cow's horns is rich in hope and the promise of fertility, as we know from other texts.[19] The verse has, again, a typically staggered syntax: specifically, *viśālam*—the "wide (expanse)"—is separated from its substantive both by the genitive *asyāḥ* and by the *yati* break, which also gives an extra charge to *śṛṅgântaram*, "the space between the horns," at the sensitive opening of the final *pāda*. In short, even if we refrain from projecting onto this passage the current rage for interstices, and without insisting on the semantic burdens of the syntax, we still should notice the way Kālidāsa has framed and articulated this literally pregnant tableau. Indeed, on a still wider level the entire episode unfolding in the forest is one of those necessary retreats from kingship into a far less structured domain, at once contrasted with the normal sequencing of the city and imbued with the energy and regenerative potential that enables such sequencing to exist.

For our purposes, it is, however, not the gap as such that matters. The deeper point has to do with the poet's opening up of a certain space within which linear sequencing no longer works as usual. Once this space exists in a verse, many new developments become possible—developments such as temporal dilation or contraction, complex repetition, resonance, inversion, a certain semantic "thickening,' and so on; we will explore some of these later. Even apparent linear sequence has certain rhythms that always include pauses, silences, telescoping, and compression. A strong example is 2.24, describing Dilīpa's nocturnal ritual at the Nandinī's side:

tām antika-nyasta-bali-pradīpām anv-āsya goptā gṛhiṇī-sahāyaḥ/
krameṇa suptām anu saṃviveśa suptotthitām prātar anūdatiṣṭhat//

The protector, with his wife to help him,
sat beside the cow, with offerings and lamps
set before her, and as she slowly fell asleep,
he, too, slept beside her,
only to rise at dawn as she slept
and woke.

The verse, again a very powerful one, condensing considerable movement and feeling, seems to hover uneasily between redundancy/repetition and asyndeton. Note the three *anu*s: while each can be accounted for (two *upasarga*s, one *karma-pravacanīya*), we still hear a kind of stutter, and to reinforce this impression we have the surprising repetition of *suptāṃ/supta-[utthitām]* and the slightly puzzling *krameṇa* at the start of *pāda* 3. Mallinātha perceptively tells us: *atrânu-śabdena dhenu-rāja-vyāpārayoḥ paurvâparyam ucyate. krama-śabdena dhenu-vyāpārāṇām eva.*

19. Cf. Śrīnātha, *Bhīmakhaṇḍamu*, 1.113.

("The word *anu* here designates the relative sequencing of the actions of both the cow and the king, respectively. The word *krama* indicates the sequence of the cow's actions only"). This makes good sense and helps straighten out the otherwise somewhat interwoven processes (it also, as Mallinātha says, avoids the charge of *paunaruktya*, repetition). On the other hand, one could with equal logic take *krameṇa* as adverbially describing only the cow's slow descent into sleep, not the whole series of her actions. Repeating the *anu* does give us a sense of the king's total focus on Nandinī; he does nothing that is not responsive to her needs or states, he stays close to her at all times, seems to see and feel nothing else—as his vow demands. Still, the verse is undoubtedly iconic, that is, verbally matched to the rhythms and experience of its subjects; an entire evening, night, and dawn pass before our eyes as we listen to it; this is a time-interval that is both full of activity and experience and remarkably fleeting, as the *pūrva-kāla-karmadhāraya* compound *suptotthita* suggests: "no sooner asleep than awake." (Is this an element in the king's no doubt exhausting experience, night after night?) But above all there is the slight "chugging" effect of the syntax, which admirably imitates and recreates the extended, rather uneven series of activities and states of consciousness, their shifting intensities, and the texture of duration. In short, the *antara* position achieves an iconic effect, with subtle isomorphism between the syntactic and the semantic domains.

Very similar, in terms of the composition of the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole, is the famous retrospective *sarga* 13: Rāma, flying home to Ayodhyā in the *Puṣpaka-vimāna*, points out to the recently recovered Sītā the whole itinerary of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative. We find ourselves in a sort of limbo between forward-oriented (semi-narrative) modes, a middle space that is, however, structured by what frames it on either side, and by the urge to further movement across the gap. Such is the syntax of this dynastic history, a matter of repeated emptying, breaking off, and replenishing or, perhaps, of dangerous yet generative middle zones (where the poet situates himself)—and we might recall that the return to Ayodhyā is immediately followed by Sītā's pregnancy and sudden exile, a still more severe threat to continuity than any previously described. At this juncture, still on the edge of "history" proper, elaborate retrospection aligns our text with the mainstream *Rāmāyaṇa* mode of double-voiced frame and reflexive or self-embedded story (the protagonists recapitulate in reverse their own previous experiences as if surveying them from a point ostensibly internal to the narrative).[20] These are matters to be studied further (see § D).

Before leaving the *antara* position, we should perhaps recall the most salient meta-poetic image we have in this text. At the very beginning the poet describes

20. Both these features are discussed in length in Shulman 2001, 255–92 (on Bhavabhūti).

himself as "greedy for the poet's fame" (*kavi-yaśaḥ-prârthī*) yet utterly, ludicrously unable to fulfill his set task of telling the story of the Raghus; he is like the dwarf who greedily stretches up his arms toward hanging fruit that can be reached only by someone very tall (*prāṃśu-labhye phale lobhād udbāhur iva vāmanaḥ*, 1.3). He stands, that is, on this side of the tantalizing gap.

B.3. Shattering, Splitting, Recomposing

What empties itself out may also be said to split or break open, and what splits and scatters tends to lose pieces of itself, to suggest further syntactical breaks or subtle ellipses. I regard these metaphoric registers as closely analogous and as reinforcing one another. Among many examples in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, two will have to suffice. Here is the rather strange verse 6.5, at Indumatī's *svayaṃvara*, where all the princes of the world are gathered, expectant:

tāsu śriyā rāja-paraṃparāsu prabhā-viśeṣodaya-durnirīkṣyaḥ/
sahasradhâtmā vyarucad vibhaktaḥ payo-mucāṃ paṅktiṣu vidyuteva//

The very self of royal splendor,
blinding in its peculiar brilliance,
split into a thousand pieces, refracted
in the ranks of those kings, as a flash
of lightning shatters and is reflected
in cloud upon cloud.

Śrī, "royal splendor," is axiomatically one, yet every king embodies a small piece of it (actually, of "her"). Some, of course—like Aja, our hero—may have more than others. In any case, the assembly hall where the *svayaṃvara* will take place is rather like a hall of mirrors, each splinter of Śrī reflecting back as it encounters every other splinter. The goddess has broken into thousands of luminous fragments. On the other hand, as Hemādri suggests, the *upamā* in *pāda* 4 links these refulgent kings with the dark rain-clouds (*meghopamā rājñāṃ mālinyârtham*). The goddess has thus taken up position within a large series of perhaps unworthy vessels; Indumatī will have to decide where she—Lakṣmī/Śrī—really resides (and not only where Indumatī herself feels a certain attraction or fancy). Perhaps this is the true choice that awaits her. In this case, we might pay special attention to the epithet *prabhā-viśeṣodaya-durnirīkṣyaḥ*, which goes with *ātmā*, the "self" of splendor. Śrī, the good king's proper companion, is blinding in her "peculiar brilliance." There is something different about her, a luminosity unlike any other, although it shares the lightning's propensity to shatter and reflect. Here we may be close to another consistent thematic emphasis of the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole. This royal family, precisely because of

its centrality and prominence, has the task of "capturing" and "holding" this notoriously elusive and fickle goddess, which is to say—of awakening her, or of activating or reactivating her presence, which tends to atrophy, to stray, to wane. Very probably the royal poet's task can be defined in these terms.[21]

Parsing the verse mechanically, we see that Śrī has effectively caused her "self" to shine forth, just as lightning causes itself to be refracted in the clouds. Śrī is the active agent (*kartrī*), as Mallinātha tells us, and *ātmā* the grammatical subject. The problem lies just here, for we might have preferred a genitive to the instrumental *śriyā* (indeed, this wish comes through even in Mallinātha: *ātmā śriyaḥ svarūpaṃ vyarucad vyadyotiṣṭha*). The awkwardness becomes particularly clear in *pāda* 4, where the subject (*ātmā* again) is missing and must be resumed, in a somewhat forced and elliptical syntagma, from *pāda* 3. Does lightning also have an *ātman*-self? Why has the poet chosen this construction? Some might hear an echo of *Bhagavadgītā* 6.6; or we might sense the magnetic pull of a proto-ergative construction, later to emerge with great prominence in Sanskrit *kāvya* and in the spoken languages of the north.[22] Another possibility is to understand *ātmā* more concretely as "body," as Vallabhadeva does (... *vibhāgī-kṛta ātmā deho reje*); but is Śrī's body any different from her "self"? However we seek to understand this construction, the semantics of self-division (and subsequent re-composition) are clear. Śrī has herself been split (*vibhaktā*) open and scattered, just as the sentence is broken up by its uneasy ellipsis. A powerful tension inhabits this verse in both the syntactic and the semantic domains.

It is thus of some interest to see this pattern repeat itself at the very moment that Śrī is being reintegrated, by proxy, with her true consort, Aja—at the post-*svayaṃvara* wedding celebration.

hastena hastaṃ parigṛhya vadhvāḥ sa rājasūnuḥ sutarāṃ cakāse/
anantarâśoka-latā-pravālaṃ prāpyeva cūtaḥ pratipallavena//
āsīd varaḥ kaṇṭakita-prakoṣṭhaḥ svinnâṅguliḥ saṃvavṛte kumārī/
vṛttis tayoḥ pāṇi-samāgamena samaṃ vibhakteva mano-bhavasya// (7.21–22)

Taking the bride's hand
in his hand, the prince was radiant
as a mango tree that winds a budding
aśoka creeper held against it deep into its own
unfolding buds.

The hair on the groom's wrists bristled,
the bride's fingers were wet with sweat.

21. See, for example, 3.36; 8.13; 9.30; 17.46; also 17.25; further references in note 61.
22. See Hook 1991.

As their hands touched one another,
Passion was evenly split
between them.

Polyptotic repetition (*hastena hastam*) is not uncommon in Kālidāsa (in varying stylistic forms, cf., for example, 1.89 and 2.6); here it serves iconically to bind together the two partners who, naturally, already love one another but who have not yet made physical contact (see Mallinātha on 7.22). Their closeness, indeed actual interweaving of selves, comes through in the *upamā* of 7.21, where the *aśoka* buds are *anantara*, "*without* intervening space" (M.: *saṃnihita*). This makes good sense; the dynasty is (hopefully) crossing the precarious gap. What is, perhaps, more striking is the way this moment of fusion is described in 7.22—as a complementary, symmetrical split in the ongoing operations (*vṛtti*) of the Love-God, who distributes goose bumps to Aja and clammy fingers to Indumatī. In theory, these two should occur simultaneously in the same individual. In the present case, the evenness of the distribution is what claims attention, generating an *utprekṣā* signaled by *iva*.[23] Syntactically, *vṛttiḥ* here neatly parallels the *ātmā* of 6.5, analyzed earlier, as the subject of division. The welding together of male and female is understood in terms of fission (*vibhakti*) within the internal force that animates the lovers' mutual attraction.

Anticipating a little, we might notice the close echo of Kālidāsa's idiom in Bhartṛhari's descriptions of time, *kāla*, from the early verses of his *Kālasamuddeśa*:

tasyâtma bahudhā bhinno bhedair dharmântarâśrayaiḥ/
na hi bhinnam abhinnam vā vastu kiñcana vidyate// (6)

[Time's] "self" is split in many ways through differences based on various *dharma*s.[24]
Still, there is nothing that is truly split or unsplit.

Three verses earlier Bhartṛhari states the idea slightly differently:

utpattau ca sthitau caiva vināśe câpi tadvatām/
nimittaṃ kālam evâhur vibhaktenâtmanā sthitam// (3)

The cause of the emergence, continuous existence, and disappearance of phenomena [possessed of measurable activities, see v.2] is what people call "time," which operates through self-division.

Thus time, like lightning, like the goddess of royalty, seems to have a fissiparous *ātman*. Such resonances or affinities are worthy of attention, and not merely in purely syntactic terms; a wider conceptual figure may be implied.

23. See Cāritravardhana, cited by Nandargikar.
24. Helaraja glosses *dharmântarāṇi: kriyā-rūpāṇi*, modes of activity.

Let me suggest again that emptying and filling seem logically connected and, indeed, consistently rearticulated by such notions as shattering and reassembling or extinguishing and reigniting. Moreover, the royal family is itself repeatedly subject to precisely this process that each time miraculously reproduces the father in his son. Thus the poet tells us that at Aja's birth:

rūpaṃ tad ojasvi tad eva vīryaṃ tad eva naisargikam unnatatvam/
na kāraṇāt svād bibhide kumāraḥ pravartito dīpa iva pradīpāt// (5.37)

That same vigorous body,
the same energy,
the same inborn nobility—
the boy was in no way divided from his source
as a burning flame is no different from
its kindling flame.

Aja is literally "not split off" (*na bibhide*) from his paternal source or cause, *kāraṇa*. Somehow or other, the linkage is maintained. One should never take it for granted, any more than we should rely on the natural integrity of the sentence, in this case a highly appropriate anacoluthon. The initial list of self-replicating features (body, energy, nobility) comes to a halt—as so often in everyday speech—in a sort of empty space where the speaker rests before starting afresh. Perhaps there is, after all, some meaning to the epithets that have selectively attached themselves to this poet, "smoky" or "lamp-flame" Kālidāsa, master of tenuous connectivity under conditions of potential darkness, emptiness, diffusion.[25]

These somewhat tentative connections—linking syntax, stylistic repetition, and theme—can perhaps be fleshed out. Ellipsis, polyptoton, and anacoluthon are important indications of more general processes at work in this text; but there are, perhaps, more powerful ways to explore their meaning.

C. On Repetition

I have used the word "regularities"—the object of our search—but we might do better to speak of repetition, the *sine qua non* of meaning. What repeats demands attention (and even a first time repeats). Singularity, that is, is also rooted in repetition.[26] There are thus two persistent questions that can guide

25. *dīpa-śikhā-kālidāsa*, after 6.67 and *dhūma-kālidāsa* (7.43); see note 13. These images are surprisingly recurrent: see 5.37, 5.74, 6.8, 7.43, 7.55 (discussion in the following section), 12.1.

26. Thus we have the common *kāvya* topos of the uniquely beautiful woman created by an extraordinary act of Brahmā yet endowed with exactly the same lotus-like face and nymphaea-like eyes, and so on, that every other woman has.

our work. First, what is it that repeats? (Where is the repetition situated, and in how many linked domains?) Secondly, can we reach an analytic definition of primary patterning by examining an extended passage (and then perhaps, extrapolating to the work seen as a whole)? The patterns I mean always have an observable integrity and consistency as grid, template, or map—especially when, as is usually the case, we are dealing with complex modular units with their subordinate parts. Such units tend to emerge in a certain rhythm, which we can almost always discern by looking closely. They may even have a process-oriented "structure," although this term may not do justice to their dynamic nature. In any case, it is not unusual to find systemic features active in consistently recurring ways. Such systemic, patterned modules, which are sustained by an underlying metaphysics proper to *kāvya*, frequently take the form of a "figure" (in A. L. Becker's sense).[27] Here the *alaṅkāra-śāstra* does provide a useful language for description, especially since the later *ālaṅkārika*s were themselves fascinated by precisely these complex modular forms. We can also follow Auerbach and focus on figuration as a kind of syntax.

I want to take one extended example, again from *sarga* 5. Aja, the young prince won by the depleted Raghu's successful gift to Kautsa—born out of the empty gap and its subsequent filling up—has gone to Indumatī's *svayaṃvara* in Vidarbha. On the way he has a brief encounter with a rampaging elephant on the banks of the Narmadā River. This elephant emerges trumpeting from the river, whose waters it splits (*bhindan*) with its trunk that repeatedly curls inward and extends outward (*saṃhara-vikṣepa-laghu-kriyeṇa hastena*, 5.45)[28]—perhaps another eloquent iconic image in harmony with the theme of precarious continuity. The dynasty, too, maintains its continuous presence through this movement of contraction and extension, which we will also shortly discover as a primary temporal rhythm. Aja judiciously aims an arrow at the elephant's temple (*kumbha*), and immediately the animal is transformed into its original form as the *gandharva* Priyaṃvada. Prince and elephant, having thus quite accidentally (*daiva-yogāt*, 60) achieved an unintended friendship (*sakhyam acintya-hetu*), go their separate ways (but Priyaṃvada first gives Aja a useful weapon: see note 41 later). Aja is warmly received in Vidarbha and sent to his regally appointed quarters for the (pre-*svayaṃvara*) night.

At this point the meter changes (from *Upajāti* to *Vasantatilakā*), and we are offered a small, self-contained, highly memorable inset. Sleep—a woman,

27. "A figure is a unit of language considered from more than just structural perspectives: a unit of language in which interpersonal and generic (prior-text) constraints are also in view. A figure is a unit of language considered thus from a rhetorical rather than a logical point of view, a move in what Wittgenstein called a language game." Becker 1995, 224.

28. M: *saṃhāra-vikṣepayoḥ sankocana-prasāraṇayor laghu-kriyeṇa kṣipra-vyāpāreṇa.*

Nidrā—overtakes our prince, like a lover who misreads her partner's mood (*bhāvâvabodha-kaluṣā dayiteva*, 64). Kings, like thieves and lovers, tend to be sleepless, as Mallinātha informs us. More likely, Sleep is jealous of the king's infatuation with another lover, Indumatī (thus Hemādri and Cāritravardhana: *anyatrânusakto 'yam ity abhiprāya-vedanena kaluṣā aprasannā dayiteva*), and therefore overpowers him by entering into his eyes (*nayanâbhimukhī babhūva*), as if to exclude the possibility that he would see anyone else. This notion of jealous rivalry and its consequences recurs in what follows immediately, the extended wake-up call (*suprabhātam*) sung by the bards in the royal retinue.[29] Aja has less than a single verse in which to sleep. Sleep has briefly entered him and must now make her exit. The more general pattern of emptying and filling thus assumes a new form in the potential space between sleeping and waking, a space naturally aligned with poetry and poetic visions.[30]

There is a certain consistency about the *suprabhātam* as a whole (verses 66–74), as can easily be shown, though we will examine closely only a few of the verses. They tend to be relatively complex, both syntactically and figuratively (much more so than the *Upajāti* passage that precedes them, with its relatively strong narrative component). This is something like "pure" *kāvya*, an extended lyrical moment, each link of which is polished, compacted with resonant energies, and given to unusually complex hypotaxis. The beginning, however, is still relatively simple and clear:

rātrir gatā matimatāṃ vara muñca śayyām
dhātrā dvidhaiva nanu dhūr jagato vibhaktā/
tām ekatas tava bibharti gurur vinidras
tasyā bhavān apara-dhurya-padâvalambī// (66)

Night is over,
wise prince.
Get out of bed.
The burden of this world
has been split in two
by its Creator.
One part of it is borne
by your sleepless father.
You, lord, must now assume
the other half.

29. Ever since this model was articulated, *suprabhātam* texts (such as one hears in temples all over South India) tend to be composed in *Vasantatilakā*.

30. Shulman 2001, 240–44.

Here is the familiar "problem" once again: how does the kingdom pass successfully from father to son—especially if the latter happens to be asleep? The first words of the bards have a slight sting, as if they wanted to shame Aja into coming awake. Like it or not, he will have to take over his father's burdens. But the split itself is not uninteresting,[31] and the suggestion of the pregnant gap between father and son sets up a certain syntactic tension, which becomes yet more compelling in the following verse:

nidrā-vaśena bhavatâpy anavekṣamāṇā
paryutsukatvam abalā niśi khaṇḍiteva/
laksmīr vinodayati yena digantalambī
so 'pi tvad-ānana-ruciṃ vijahāti candraḥ// (67)

All night long, while you slept with Sleep,
Lakṣmī, your regal lover,
has been pretending she doesn't want you,
as would any jealous woman.
She's been flirting with the Moon.
Now he's gone into decline and lost
the little luster that had reminded her
of your face.

There are many difficulties with the text of this verse, which Cāritravardhana actually classes as spurious (*kṣepo 'yam*). I see no reason whatsoever to exclude it, especially if we hold to the inclusive principle hinted at earlier: a verse that belongs to the "received" (as opposed to the merely "recorded") text deserves respect for that reason alone. The manuscripts, however, offer the tempting reading (*bhavatâpy*) *anavekṣyamāṇā* for *anavekṣamāṇā*—thus Aja's fault would not be that of falling asleep but the still graver one of simply ignoring his proper lover, the royal goddess Lakṣmī. Mallinātha holds to *anavekṣamāṇā*, and we will, for the moment at least, follow him in this (thus explaining the instrumental *nidrā-vaśena bhavatā* as dependent upon *paryutsukatvam* by Pāṇini 2.3.44, *prasitotsukābhyāṃ tṛtīyā ca*).[32] The real problem is not so much grammatical as syntactic and logical or semantic, for the verse unfolds in a densely compacted pattern that might seem, for most of us, a little overwhelming for the first thing in the morning.

Simply paraphrased, this verse, like its predecessor, jibes at the sleepy prince. He has, as it were, chosen a new mistress, Sleep, over his usual queen or

31. As we saw in discussing 7.22 earlier (the god of love equally split between Aja and Indumatī at the moment of their wedding). Again, emptying and filling run parallel to notions of splitting and reconnecting.

32. See also 5.11.

consort, Lakṣmī. Naturally, Lakṣmī is piqued and, in the time-honored wisdom of aunts and grandmothers, has taken up with a new lover—the Moon—both to get even with Aja and, more important, to force him to pay attention to her and thus to win him back (also to while away the time she has to wait for him). Indeed, this message is precisely what Mallinātha offers as the "moral" of this verse, the message the bards hope will penetrate the prince's mind: "Get rid of Sleep and pay some attention to this woman Lakṣmī, who really loves you and needs you" (*ato nidrāṃ vihāya tāṃ lakṣmīm ananya-śaraṇāṃ parigṛhāṇety arthaḥ*). It is, in a way, all a matter of attention—this business of sleeping and waking, of choosing a wife and becoming a full-fledged king. But the sting built into the verse, with its strong articulation of a set of lovers' triangles, is softened by the way the bards describe Aja's temporary rival for Lakṣmī's affections. The moon, it is true, is—or rather, was—faintly reminiscent of Aja's own refulgent features (hence Lakṣmī's choice of him for her flirtation); but this similarity doesn't actually last for long. It is dawn; the moon is turning pale and sinking to the horizon. In short, Aja, assuming he is awake enough to take in what he's been told, can breathe easily now. In the end, it isn't much of a competition.

We recognize the figure as a version of *vyatireka*, the inversion of the relative weight of the subject and object of comparison. Aja's face, as we know, is, by definition, like the moon: the *upamāna* normally exceeds the *upameya* in the critical shared feature (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*). In this case, however, Aja's bright face has the upper hand; the moon pales at dawn and disappears, whereas the prince is, presumably, always elegant and lucent. So the standard of comparison is superseded by the subject, and a certain scorn or ridicule even attaches to this poor, defeated standard. *Vyatireka* often includes this element of affected scorn—*pratīpa*.

But let us see how this figure is worked into the dense texture of the verse. Various syntactic, lexical, and semantic choices deserve notice. The moon is *diganta-lambī*, literally "slipping (hanging) toward the (western) direction", thus "gone into decline" in our less-than-literal translation—echoing the final lexeme of the previous verse (*apara-dhurya-padâvalambī*: Aja must assume the other half of the earth's burden). Such resonant repetitions provide an element of coherence and continuity; they are extremely common in Kālidāsa (also in Bhāravi). Aja will "slip into" his regal role; the moon slips toward the horizon.

Then there is the somewhat striking and suggestive matter of the two instances of the particle *api* in our verse. The second one sets off the subject of the main sentence, *so ('pi)...candraḥ: that* Moon, the ostensible focus of the main figure, is losing ground (actually, luster). We can understand this *api* without difficulty. Lakṣmī elected to flirt with someone faintly reminiscent of Aja, but this temporary diversion—he and no other—cannot bear the force of this

imposed role. The first *api* (*bhavatâpy anavekṣamāṇā*) is more problematic, as several commentators have noticed. We could paraphrase: "Lakṣmī, pretending she doesn't want *you* (of all people—you, her true lover), is flirting with the Moon...". Or, if we read *anavekṣyamāṇā*: "Since Lakṣmī was feeling neglected or unnoticed by *you* of all people (her true lover), she is flirting with the Moon...". Mallinātha directs us to the former possibility: *api-śabdas tad-viṣayânuragasyânapekṣyatva-dyotanârthaḥ*. Hemādri adds: *api-śabdo lakṣmī-vāllabhyaṃ sūcayati*, "the word *api* indicates Lakṣmī's great affection (for Aja)." (Vallabhadeva substitutes *hi* for the *api*; this has its own problems). In short, one way or another, the *api* intensifies the imagined pique of the proper consort faced with her husband's temporary affair with another woman and underlines the fact that these two—king and regal splendor—really belong together and normally want one another. The only problem, as we know from the earlier verse, is that one of the two, Aja, has fallen asleep.

Still, the repetition of *api* is curious and may well point to the doubled-up syntax of the verse as a whole. It is not so easy to describe this pattern discursively, but, simplifying a little, we could say, in line with the caesura breaks, something like the following. *Pādas* 1 through 3 constitute a long relative clause built sequentially as [*pāda*] (*a*) adjectival phrase qualifying Lakṣmī, the subject of this relative clause, in relation to its imminent object (*paryutsukatvam* + instrumental complement) (*b*) that object along with a straightforward *upamā* ["like any other (piqued) woman"], and (*c*) the subject of this clause in *pāda*-initial/line-initial position together with a modifier of the subject of the main sentence (*dig-anta-lambī*) and the relative pronoun (*yena*). *Pāda* 4 then provides syntactic closure by allowing this latter subject, the moon, to appear. The final *pāda* also fully articulates the implicit *vyatireka* figure.[33] Stated still more simply, the basic problem is that all three actors of the relevant triad—Aja, Lakṣmī, Candra—are actively doing something in this verse: Aja is seeking solace or diversion in sleep (that is, the fourth actor, Nidrā, by now quite passive), Lakṣmī has been flirting with the Moon, and the Moon is waning and setting. These multiple and contrary activities are all compressed syntactically into a single sentence. The lovers' melodrama, like an unfolding dream, interweaves its several staggered sequences. Moreover, while everything is rather emphatically taking place in the present tense, this layered present actually presumes and expresses a certain retrospective set of circumstances from the recent past (nightfall, falling asleep), as if the verse were, in sheer temporal terms, being drawn backwards toward its beginning—or rather, reading forward, as if the whole temporal process had to be syntactically modeled in all its emotional complexity. A fragment of a Kashmiri commentary

33. Following Mallinātha. Alternatively, with Vallabha (reading *anavekṣyamāṇā*), *paryutsukatvam* in b is the object of *vinodayati* in c: *yena candreṇa śrīr utkaṇṭhatām ativāhayati*.

ascribed by Nandargikar to Vallabha nicely sums this up: *yathā khaṇḍitā abalā niśi rātrau nāryantara-saṅgād bhartrā anavekṣyamāṇā* [*sic*] *satī kvâpi tat-pratinidhi-suhṛt-saṃnidhāne autsukyam vinodayati*, "Lakṣmī, like a peeved mistress, ignored by her husband at night because he became involved with another woman, is distracting herself from her (deeper) longing (for her husband) in the presence of a friend, a substitute for him."[34] The emphasis is on the husband's betrayal, that is, on Aja's surrender to sleep, and on the existence of an inferior substitute, *pratinidhi*, for him, as we by now expect from the verse's figurative structure; but also on the causal and temporal progression built into the verse.

The figurative structure also inverts and draws the listener backwards. The moon is losing its brightness, thus drawing Lakṣmī, and us, backwards to Aja, the true subject, who can now move forward (if only he will wake up). Perhaps waking is anyway something like this; the dream (or the poem) slips or recedes inward as attention begins to shift outward. It is of some interest that Lakṣmī, the subject of the relative clause, and Candra, the subject of the main sentence, syntactically bracket the entire second line, which thus acquires the kind of internal multidirectionality (*raznonapravlennost'*) that Segal has discovered as a regular feature in Mandelstam.[35] The question of attention, however, remains central to another, wider level of reading the poem. Aja, like Raghu in the opening verses of *sarga* 4, is asked to pay attention to this business of becoming king—which is also *how* he becomes king. In short, he has to wake up. The *suprabhātam* is thus another moment of *vikṣepa* or *prastāraṇa*, the outward expansive movement across a gap that we defined as characteristic of earlier thematic strands in the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Aja will go on to marry Indumatī, whose death will be a moment of *saṃhāra* or *saṅkocana*, "retraction," the opening up of another threatening gap in the precarious line of kings. As the text progresses, especially in the final *sarga*, such gaps become wider and more dangerous. In general, as stated earlier, we experience again and again the delicate transition from father to son and the son's almost miraculous assumption of the burden passed on to him from across the gap. The father recreates himself as son, dividing and reconstituting this royal self in a manner that both is and is not continuous with and equivalent to its former embodiments. Who is to say if this process will work even one more time? (Think of the final verse of the text).

But we have not yet exhausted this one eloquent verse. For perhaps its most striking feature is the isomorphism between figure and syntax. If the first 3 *pāda*s seem to be aimed at waking Aja's dormant jealousy—since Lakṣmī,

34. See the editors' end-note on this verse, *Raghu-pañcikā* 376. They retain as authentically Vallabha's:

sā ca tenânyāsaktenânavekṣyamāṇā tat-pratinidhi-suhṛt-saṃnidhāv autsukyam vinodayati.

35. Segal 1998: 11. My thanks to Dr Krishnamacharyulu of Andhra University for this anecdote.

his poets tell him, has taken another lover—the fourth, concluding *pāda* reverses this theme and spurs Aja toward waking, assuming his role, becoming himself. As he does so, the rival lover retreats and declines. *Vyatireka* regularly incorporates this reverse directionality. In the present case, it also incorporates the simple *upamā* of *pāda* 2: Lakṣmī is like the peeved beloved, *khaṇḍita-nāyikā*—but her choice is revealed for what it is, no more than a temporary act of rather impoverished substitution. The *upamā* adds spice, poignancy, and a certain depth to the main figure, which it also rationalizes or explains. But as the syntax reaches toward closure in the final *pāda*, the sentence naturally discloses a concentric, clockwise rhythm or movement, the main clause enfolding its prior relative clause and the latter's embedded objects (as is natural in a left-branching language like classical Sanskrit) just as the *vyatireka* circles back toward its true subject (Aja) and the embedded, dependent *upamā*.

Candra, in other words, is actually embedded at the center of a spiral that includes its various modifiers and subordinate clauses; reading the sentence is thus rather like penetrating past these outer layers of the spiral in order to reach the center—which is, of course, why this subject is delayed to the end of the verse. There is, however, an important question about what we discover when we finally reach this inner core.[36]

Let us try a more conventional form of linear paraphrase. We can, in theory, reduce both syntax and figure to two sets of simple propositions, each divided into two parts. The syntax is naturally structured around the grammatical subject, the moon, or its proleptic pronoun, so the basic statement (set A) is as follows:

This is the moon
the one overshadowed by your face
the one that is setting
[Wake up]

Note that to produce this paraphrase we have to read the verse in a backward direction ("the one that is setting," *dig-anta-lambī*, is in *pāda* **c**). Now, *preceding* set A, as is natural, we find the long relative clause (set B):

[This is the moon]
the one Lakṣmī has been flirting with all night
(like a *khaṇḍita-nāyikā*)
in order to distract herself from missing you
who have fallen asleep
[Wake up]

36. Right-branching languages like English, German, or Russian can almost never produce such effects. See the discussion by Egnor 1978.

Once again, we are reading backwards, although the actual syntactic progression is much less straightforward than it appears in the paraphrase.

The logic of the figure is much simpler, consisting of two statements:

- Your face is like the moon. (1)
- The moon is no longer very much like your face. (2)
 [Conclusion: Wake up]

(1) is implicit, never stated directly, while (2) is explicitly articulated in the final *pāda*. What is very striking is that (1) is correlated to B while (2) belongs in A. Since B actually precedes A in the audible sequence of recitation, the internal movement of the figure turns out to be perfectly harmonious with that of the syntax. Indeed, the figure could be said to recapitulate the syntactic unfolding, or vice versa.

Finally, add the dimension of straightforward meaning. Again there is a striking conclusion. The moon, situated at the heart of both syntax and figure, situated at the end point of the audible sequence of recitation, does provide integrity and closure to this verse; there is, no doubt, a certain psychic relief, also pleasure, at the moment we reach this subject and understand it in relation to all the rest. But is there not also a certain deflation of expectation? Is this verse really "about" its ostensible subject, the moon? The true subject of the verse, in semantic terms, is surely that element we encounter first—**you**, the sleepy king (*nidrā-vaśena bhavatā*....). If the verse is about anything or anyone, it must be about Aja (it also acts *upon* Aja). We could also say that the verse has, in effect, three competing, ranked subjects, who turn up in this order—Aja, the goddess Lakṣmī, and the moon. Stated in this order, this is a declining series; the moon is undoubtedly the least of the lot in terms of any real significance to the listeners (not only Aja, but ourselves as well), though it retains the somewhat empty honor of being, formally, the subject (together with its correlative pronoun). Indeed, in a certain sense the utterance as a whole empties out its grammatical center at the very moment of its self-completion, much in the manner of these mythic kings with their talent for various modes of kenosis. In semantic terms, the moon makes way for Aja. The goddess of royal fortune also returns to Aja. Aja, we hope and assume, wakes up.

Such internal rhythms, if regular and repetitive, suggest that isomorphism in syntax and figuration may well extend, in a somewhat looser mode, to the level of narrative or theme. Without repetition, they would be invisible. Given consistent repetition, they are inescapable. What is more, they tend to cluster in larger patterns that I would like to call "modular segments" and that constitute the true building blocks of a poetics attuned to processes of emergent musical sound.[37]

37. See Shulman 2005.

Let me give two or three concise examples from the continuation of this same *suprabhātam* passage. Modularity implies the existence of relative complex units with regularly recurring, systemically organized, and internally integrated components or subsidiary levels. I would be tempted to argue that the later *alaṅkāra-śāstra*—from Ruyyaka on—concentrated its analytical efforts precisely on such complex modules, in which case we may have an already existing analytical language waiting for application. Figuration can provide a flexible, context-sensitive *modus operandi*. Thus in subsequent verses of the *suprabhātam, vyatireka*, widely understood, reappears as a sort of master trope. Look, for example, at verse 69:

vṛntāc chlatham harati puṣpam anokahānām
saṃsṛjyate sarasi-jair aruṇâṃśu-bhinnaiḥ/
svābhāvikaṃ para-guṇena vibhāta-vāyuḥ
saurabhyam īpsur iva te mukha-mārutasya//

Prying loose flowers from their stalks on the trees,
mingling with the lotus blown open by the light of dawn,
the morning breeze could be seeking to borrow from another
the natural fragrance of your breath.

The bards are telling the sleepy king: wake, can't you feel the gentle and fragrant morning breeze? But it is not enough just to bring this natural event to the king's attention; a pointed compliment has to be worked into the address. If this dawn event is filled with intoxicating fragrance, this must be the result of a deliberate act of borrowing or appropriation. The breeze is not naturally fragrant; it depends on the flowering trees and the lotus ponds for this gift.[38] What one lacks in oneself can perhaps be made up by resorting to another (*para-guṇena*). Aja, however, lacks nothing: his breath is naturally fragrant (*svābhāvikam ... saurabhyam*): indeed, the entire verse is balanced on this highly conspicuous *svābhāvikam*, "natural", at the start of *pāda* **c.** We could say that "naturalness" is the proper theme of the exercise.

But if the king's mouth has a natural fragrance or sweetness that the morning breeze strives to imitate, at second hand, then the natural relations of *upameya* and *upamāna* have again been reversed; the standard of comparison is decidedly inferior to the subject. (Thus Mallinātha: *para-guṇenânyadīya-guṇena sāṅkrāmika-gandhenety arthaḥ*). Maybe this sort of flattery is necessary if our hero is to get out of bed. Along with it comes the notion of opening (the unfolding lotuses, *sarasi-jair aruṇâṃśu-bhinnaiḥ*) and filling, thus also connecting

38. As in the well-known case of the Pāṇḍya queen's hair: *Kāḷahasti-māhātmyamu* of Dhūrjaṭi 3.131–221.

(*saṃsṛjyate*). There is also the humanizing or anthropomorphizing tendency of the *utprekṣā*—the desperate breeze resorts to stealing what it does not own—in the latent *vyatireka* mode we have been exploring. The effect, as in the previous verse studied, is a mirror-like inversion, perhaps clearest at the critical juncture that juxtaposes *svābhāvikam*, the natural, with the instrumental *paraguṇena*, the feature derived from a nameless other. On one side we have the implicit, nearly invisible subject (Aja's breath); on the other, the highly active yet degraded breeze with its two verbs (surprisingly unconnected by any coordinate conjunction). The contrast inhabits the space between the two words opening *pāda* **c**, followed, at last, by the grammatical subject (*vibhāta-vāyuḥ*, the morning breeze); but the true focus of the verse, *mukha-mārutasya*, appears only at its very end, thereby giving sense to the somewhat jagged syntax with its delayed closure. Indeed, "closure" may not be the right word for this kind of lyricism, which effectively separates the main grammatical object (*saurabhyam*) both from its distant adjective (*svābhāvikam*) and from its possessive genitive (*mukha-mārutasya*) on either side. To absorb such a line the ear and mind of the listener have to put back together the distanced units; and this reintegration of what has been deliberately staggered and broken requires, once again, near-simultaneous retrograde and forward movement—the classic pattern of a *vyatireka*. Moreover, a verse like this demonstrates nicely the often-useful distinction between grammatical subject (the breeze) and the "true" (logical, figurative) subject (the prince's breath). Such a division has its own beauty and its particular semantic burden.

Recall the setting, the moment of latency and expectation before sunrise. The "original" *upamāna* is emptied of its power to the benefit of the erstwhile *upameya*, filling up, as it were, from within its own reservoir of energy. *Vyatireka* structures this still somewhat precarious gap, appearing repeatedly in the modular and segmental forms I have been trying to define. Beneath this pattern we observe the consistent mirroring not of simple features but of complex wholes. Thus if we move back one verse to 68, we learn explicitly that

tad-valgunā yugapad-unmiṣitena tāvat
sadyaḥ paraspara-tulām adhirohatāṃ dve/
praspandamāna-paruṣetara-tāram antaś
cakṣus tava pracalita-bhramaraṃ ca padmam//

Two things are mutually comparable
by virtue of their splendid, simultaneous
opening—your eye, its soft black pupil darting
inward, the lotus with a black bee
trapped inside.

The eye with its black pupil, the lotus with its frantic black bee—both come together, by *śleṣa*, through opening up at this pregnant moment (*yugapad-unmiṣitena*) and through the internal movement (adverbial *antaḥ*) each contains in its own right. Again, as in many *suprabhātam* texts, this verse aims not at describing but at effecting the transition out of sleep—at getting Aja to open his eyes, if they are still closed after the hair-raising account of Lakṣmī's nocturnal adventures. We have already noted this pattern of pragmatic action, far beyond anything merely representational, as the *raison d'être* of a verse.[39] There is also a subtle connection to the previous verse (67, on Lakṣmī and the moon) in the opening *tad*, which seems to refer to this previous poetic scenario (M: *tat tasmāl lakṣmī-parigrahaṇād valgunā manojñena...*). That is, the opening up embodied, or accomplished, by the verse is "splendid" by virtue of Lakṣmī's implicit return to her true lover, Aja. This rather striking continuity is characteristic of the *suprabhātam* as a whole, which, as remarked earlier, comprises a well-integrated unit on all levels (prosody, figuration, syntax, diction). And since we should certainly be interested, in this context, in the uses made of *Raghuvaṃśa* by the *alaṅkāra* writers, it is worth mentioning that Jayaratha, commenting on Ruyyaka's discussion of *upameyopamā*, cites this verse as his example. In *upameyopamā*, **a** is similar (only) to **b** and **b** is similar (only) to **a**. This intimate binding of the two sides of the simile can take various forms. Jayaratha points to the distinct adjectives applied to each of the two elements (*praspandamāna** for the eye, *pracalita*, for the bee), this verbal distinction in the context of what is essentially a single attribute being classed as *vastu-prativastu-bhāva*—a potentially universal category in the study of figuration, according to Jayaratha. On the other hand, the pupil and the bee reflect one another precisely, and this direct mirroring is called *bimba-pratibimba-bhāva*. Finally, the shared notion of simultaneous opening (*unmeṣa*) is articulated by a single shared phrase and thus given to direct inference (*anugamita*).[40] Without going further into the intricacies of this effort at classification, we can at least conclude that our verse was understood by Jayaratha to compound several poetic moves, with their cognitive equivalents, operating simultaneously to bring two complex entities into precise relation with one another. In this case *śleṣa* operates to ensure the modular nature of the figurative enterprise, and a direct metapoetic statement within the verse tells us something of what we should expect ("Two things are mutually comparable...".).

By now we are probably wondering if any of these patterns, however regular and recurrent, are really of use for a deeper understanding of a text as wide-ranging,

39. See also Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998, 148–52.

40. Jayaratha on Ruyyaka, *upameyopamā*.

varied, and resistant to generalization as the *Raghuvaṃśa* (or any *mahākāvya*). We have shifted the focus of analysis to a microlevel where subtle syntactic patterns, prosodial considerations, and, in particular, the old *alaṅkāra* perspective on figuration take all our attention. Can we detect a properly semantic or thematic aspect in this passage? Can it be related in nontrivial ways to the kind of themes with which we began? Happily, the *suprabhātam* verses themselves do establish a connection as well as a culminating metapoetic rationale for this short, embedded piece of text. Look at verse 71:

yāvat pratāpa-nidhir ākramate na bhānur
ahnāya tāvad aruṇena tamo nirastam/
āyodhanâgrasaratāṃ tvayi vīra yāte
kiṃ vā ripūṃs tava guruḥ svayam ucchinatti//

Although the Sun has not yet risen
in its full blaze, darkness has been cast aside
by the Sun's driver, Dawn.
Now that you, heroic lord, have become the first
among fighters, is it right that your father
should still be cutting down our foes?

This is another, somewhat more insistent attempt to shame the prince into waking. He lies half-asleep, but his father is hard at work fighting. In a way, the verse takes up the notion we saw at the beginning of this section—the burden of the earth is divided between father and son—but extends it along the lines of the *vyatireka* logic so prominent in this passage. In effect, Aja is to his father, Raghu, as the sun is to his deformed charioteer, Aruṇa. The second or subsequent element, an emergent *upameya*, by far transcends its natural *upamāna* (the son is as powerful—no, actually far more powerful—than his father). Dawn has dispelled darkness; the prince can now enter the stage in his own right. The only problem is that he is still enveloped in sleep. Getting from **a** to **b**, from father to son, from sleep to full wakefulness, remains something of a mystery. The *vyatireka* promises us, nevertheless, that the empty will soon be full.[41]

41. Note that this verse follows upon an extended *upamā* that is basically another implicit *vyatireka*: drops of glittering dew fallen onto the red interior of fresh buds look like Aja's smile (his white teeth) glistening through his bright red lips. There is no doubt that the smile exceeds the dew in brilliance (*labdha-para-bhāgatayā*, 70). As for Aja, by the time the *svayaṃvara* and wedding are over and he can head for home with his new bride, he is *svapna-nivṛtta-laulya*, "fully awake" (thus capable of putting his enemies to sleep with the *prasvāpana* weapon he received from Priyaṃvada), 7.61. We note again the sustained thematic consistency that takes us from Aja's encounter with the elephant (Priyaṃvada) on the way to Vidarbha via his brief sleep and awakening to the battle he fights on his way back.

Finally, the hauntingly beautiful verse 74 brings the *suprabhātam* to a close:

bhavati virala-bhaktir mlāna-puṣpopahāraḥ
sva-kiraṇa-pariveṣodbheda-śūnyāḥ pradīpāḥ/
ayam api ca giraṃ nas tvat-prabodha-prayuktām
anuvadati śukas te mañju-vāk pañjara-sthaḥ//

The garlands that were given you
are fading, the flowers dry.
The oil lamps are emptied of the light
they had cast around them.
Even this parrot in his cage
is sweetly mimicking the words we sing
to wake you up.

It is morning: the lamps, once filled with light, are now empty, *śūnya*. More specifically, the powerful breaking out or opening up (*udbheda*) of the luminous circle (*pariveṣa*) generated by the fire is what has been emptied or exhausted. Daylight exceeds these small flames, as the son outdoes his father (and the bards surpass the parrot?). We have returned to the notion, perhaps the leitmotif, of emptying and filling. Space itself seems to require this process: *pariveṣa*, the ring of light spreading or expanding through enclosing darkness, empties itself out, though sunlight will (temporarily) fill this space again as waking takes the place or space of sleep. Incidentally, the language used for this spatial movement of retraction and replenishing remains consistent over long periods: thus Śrīharṣa tells us that the halo, *pariveṣa*, seen from time to time around the sun and the moon is a circular mark, *kuṇḍalanā*, made by God himself to indicate that both these luminaries can be erased or canceled out (emptied)—since they are useless in the face of Nala's burning energy (*ojas*) and brilliant fame (*yaśas*).[42]

If we need further confirmation that the *suprabhātam* is conceived as an integrated, modular segment replete with regular patterns of repetition and a characteristic rhythm or movement, with specific semantic and thematic features, the poet offers us the image of the parrot in his cage melodiously copying the bards' address. The parrot, too, is by now wide awake.

Such rhythms, which may well signal, more than any other indicators, the distinctive "voice" of a poet and the innovative moves he or she has made, depend

42. *tad-ojasas tad-yaśasaḥ sthitāv imau vṛtheti citte kurute yadā yadā/*
tanoti bhānoḥ pariveṣa-kaitavāt tadā vidhiḥ kuṇḍalanāṃ vidhor api// Naiṣadhīyacarita 1.14 (see also 2.95).

on relating otherwise disparate levels—syntax, prosody, figuration, semantics, to name but the most conspicuous. In Kālidāsa's case we can state with some confidence that these "levels" are isomorphic and harmonious, and that this isomorphism intensifies dramatically the poetic effect on a listener or reader (sometimes to the point of producing a change in the world of pragmatic realities, as the *cāṭu* tradition has always insisted). We can, however, easily imagine a case where there is severe dissonance or disjunction between two or more parameters, and where such dissonance may be central to the poet's intention and achievement (in Śrīharṣa, for example?). In any case, identifying complex, recurrent modular segments does allow us to say something more than impressionistic and to address what might be thought of as systemic effects.

D. How Time Moves

I want to close with a few thoughts on the compositional logic of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, the implications of the rhythms and patterns we have been exploring, and the primary mechanisms of Kālidāsa-style *kāvya*.

As Herman Tieken reminds us,[43] the *Raghuvaṃśa* is, after all, a *vaṃśa*—a family lineage and genealogy couched, however, not in the *itihāsa* style but in that of elevated courtly poetry. In fact, narrative per se is only weakly represented in this text. Simply telling the story of king after king is clearly not the point. Kālidāsa hardly narrates; normally he describes or, better still, *models* a certain vision of reality. I will come back to this point. In any case, even if we want to think of the *vaṃśa* framework as providing some minimal coherence to an otherwise highly diversified text, we cannot help but notice an internal division into three primary, and contrasting, segments. (*a*) *Sarga*s 1 through 8 take us from Dilīpa through Raghu and Aja to the birth of Daśaratha—four "mythic" kings whose careers largely parallel or partially recapitulate one another in the sense hinted at earlier. States of blockage, stasis, death, mantic curse or emptiness give way to—or actually generate—a mode of fertility or fullness. (*b*) *Sarga*s 9 through 15 then give us a mini-*Rāmāyaṇa*, from the events of the *Bāla-kāṇḍa* right through the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. Here again the emphasis is not on telling the story, which comes through in highly synoptic ways, but on the descriptive or modeling effect that thickens its contours. We know this is a proper *Rāmāyaṇa* by several characteristic features, for example, the constitutive and proleptic role of a curse (here directed at Daśaratha, not the Niṣāda hunter—*sarga* 9), the embedded retrospective of *sarga* 13, and the rich

43. Tieken 1989.

development of, and investment in, the "Uttara-kāṇḍa." Classical *Rāmāyaṇa*s require these elements.[44] At the same time, this *Rāmāyaṇa*-segment is brought in line with the dominant thematic issues and tones of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, as we will see in a moment. In addition, as one reads through the text consecutively, a clearly marked stylistic transition occurs at the start of *sarga* 9, the opening section of this miniature *Rāmāyaṇa*. Quite suddenly, *anuprāsa, yamaka*, and *śleṣa* effects predominate, in a style very different from that of the earlier *sarga*s (though perhaps pioneering a mode that would become standard in later *kāvya*). I do not believe that this change indicates a shift in authorship, but I do think it points to the relative autonomy and distinctiveness of this segment of the poem.

(*c*) The final *sarga*s, 15 through 19, take us back to the genealogy, but with a difference. For one thing, they deal with the later series of historical or proto-historical kings—not the mythic exemplars of the opening *sarga*s. *Sarga* 18, in particular, is a kind of history and, as such, unlike anything that has gone before in this poem.[45] The final *sarga* has suffered from moralistic readings that are rather out of place: Agnivarṇa, the last king to be described, was so enamored of women that he eventually wore himself out and contracted a fatal wasting illness. But the long, charming description of his love-games is hardly pejorative; if anything, it is reminiscent of Śiva and Pārvatī's love-play in *Kumārasaṃbhava* 8. The *kāvya* ends with the promise of a new prince's birth; Agnivarṇa's widow holds the growing child in her womb "as the earth holds a handful of seeds sown in the monsoon" (*antar-gūḍhaṃ kṣitir iva nabho-bīja-muṣṭim dadhānā*, 19.57). The wasting away of Agnivarṇa is followed by an imminent rebirth, emptiness issuing into fullness, as we might by now expect.

This tripartite division—mythic beginnings, lyrical *Rāmāyaṇa* middle, proto-historical conclusion—will not, however, take us very far. Perhaps its only real usefulness lies in diminishing the force of overly normative readings of the text (thus Warder: the *puruṣârtha*s line up sequentially across the *sarga*s, and so on).[46] Clearly, something much deeper is at work; if we listen well, we can detect a rhythm or pulsation that regularly recurs. Its thematic transposition may take the form I have suggested—the repeated movement of emptying and filling, contracting and dilating, the seed or impulse of each such vector always lying ready within the other. But the rhythm itself is perhaps more important than any such translation. I think it is the pulse of time itself.

44. On the "embedded" or recapitulated narrative as a distinctive *Rāmāyana* feature, see Shulman 2001, 256–92; Goldman 1986, 365.

45. For an analytical definition of a "historical" mode in relation to various south Indian texts, including Sanskrit *kāvya*s, see Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2001.

46. Warder 3,130.

The *Raghuvaṃśa*, I would suggest, is a vast essay on time, or on the rhythm of kingship as embodying and creating time. "Essay," however, is the wrong word; once again, I would prefer to speak of modeling. Before I attempt to explain this more fully, we have to pay some attention to the always critical problem of repetition—of what it is that repeats and what patterns this repetition paints.

Sometimes seemingly minor touches are particularly impressive. The entire nineteenth *sarga* is rich with reminiscence and moving echoes of earlier passages. Look, for example, at 19:40:

saikataṃ ca sarayūṃ vivṛṇvatīṃ śroṇi-bimbam iva haṃsa-mekhalam/
sva-priyā-vilasitânukariṇīṃ saudha-jāla-vivarair vyalokayat//

He (Agnivarṇa) would watch from the palace windows
the Sarayū River with its sandy banks, round and rolling like the hips
of his favorite girl with a line of geese like a rustling belt
around her waist.

How close we are to what Indumatī was promised at her *svayaṃvara* if only she were to choose Pratīpa, the Anūpa king, for her husband:

asyâṅka-lakṣmīr bhava dīrgha-bāhor māhiṣamatī-vapra-nitamba-kāñcīm/
prāsāda-jālair jala-veṇi-ramyāṃ revāṃ yadi prekṣitum asti kāmaḥ// (6.43)

"You should choose to become his queen
if you happen to have the wish
to watch from the windows of his palace
as the Revā River winds its watery way
like a fine band around the waist
of his walled city."[47]

It is almost as if the unfulfilled, potential choice of *sarga* 6 had to be enacted before the poem could end. Similarly, we have Agnivarṇa's water-games with his courtesans (19.9), which resume Kuśa's summer dip with his palace women in the Sarayū, exquisitely portrayed in 16.54–71. And, inevitably, there is yet another nearly empty lamp:

vyoma paścima-kalā-sthitendu vā paṅka-śeṣam iva gharma-palvalam/
rājñi tat kulam abhūt kṣayâture vāmanârcir iva dīpa-bhājanam// (19.51)

Like the sky with the moon in its final phase
or a puddle in the hot-season, nothing but mud,
the royal line waned with the waning king
like a lamp as the flame flickers out.

47. A few verses further along, it is the ocean whose waves can be seen from the palace windows of the Kaliṅga king (*prāsāda-vātāyana-dṛśya-vīciḥ*, 6.56).

We could easily go on in this vein, discovering in the final cantos substantial echoes of earlier themes, figures, or turns of phrase; but there are much more promising, more inclusive vantage points. For example, one could posit the existence in the *Raghuvaṃśa* of the kind of recursive, mirror-like structure that has sometimes been proposed for the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*.[48] Thus (working backwards from the end) *sarga* 19, with its hypertrophied *kāma*, resonates and contrasts with the opening 2 *sarga*s (Dilīpa's *tapas* and self-sacrifice). *Sarga* 17—probably the only one that could be called dull—gives us an idealized portrait of the young Atithi, closely akin to *sarga* 4's idealized depiction of Raghu. *Sarga* 16 begins with the Ayodhyādevatā's nocturnal lament before Kuśa and ends with Kuśa's return to the city and his water-games there in the hot season; it thus nicely inverts (that is, repeats in reverse) the progression of *sarga* 9—Daśaratha's exit from Ayodhyā on the long hunting expedition in the springtime, exhaustively described, and its culmination in the sage's curse. At the central core of this concentric and contrastive series we find, not surprisingly, the embedded *Rāmāyaṇa* précis (like the crucial Act 4 of the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*). Symmetrical contrastive repetition would thus effectively frame the Rāma story and turn the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole into a kind of *Rāmāyaṇa*, its *mise en scène* and primary thematic or semantic burdens nicely intimated by the regular, obviously nonlinear structure of the frame. Reading through the text—in any direction, from any point—one is thus circling inward or downward toward the narrative core and its attendant meanings.

But here another, more powerful perspective awaits us. For the *Rāmāyaṇa* segment—like most of the rest of this text—reveals a clear preference for a certain defined range of emotional experience. This is not a very happy story. It begins with a curse (that contains an implicit blessing)—Daśaratha will die because of grief for his (still unborn) son. Moments of celebration, which are real enough, rapidly give way to longer periods of trauma and sorrow. In terms of sheer poetic intensity, the *Raghuvaṃśa*'s *Rāmāyaṇa* segment reaches its peak in the "Uttarakāṇḍa" narratives—Sītā's exile, her transient restoration and ultimate disappearance, and Rāma's own lonely end. In this, the embedded segment is no different from many other *Rāmāyaṇa*s. More important, it also epitomizes the tenor of the poem taken as a totality.

Thus, picking up the thread of our earlier, microlevel discussions, we find throughout the *Raghuvaṃśa* consistent repetition in the form of movement

48. See Ramanujan 1993 and Gerow 1984. In the *Śākuntala*, Acts 1 and 7 frame the text in parallel movements; similarly, Acts 2 and 6 seem to mirror one another, as do 3 and 5 (the reversal), and so on. "Kālidāsa has devised a plot that is essentially circular, returning to itself through a set of concentric circles that are defined in terms of emotional contrasts." Gerow 1984, 58–59.

between celebration and lamentation, dilation and retraction, filling and emptying; and it is the lamentation pole that repeatedly intensifies our involvement and determines the depth of our response. We need only think through these famous passages—Aja's threnody for Indumatī, Daśaratha's tragic curse, Sītā's exile, the lamentation of the city goddess, Agnivarṇa's wasting death, and so on—to see how much stronger and richer they are than their counterparts. They do not by any means exhaust the poetic landscape, which is highly varied, often surprising, and always ingeniously and elegantly articulated; but they exert a continuous or repeated claim on our attention. The true promise of a prince's birth, often wrested from reality with great difficulty and suffering, keeps giving way to the blockage or constriction implicit in loss or despair. It happens again and again, and each time the direction or movement is at least as certain, and as haunting, as its predecessor. Then, at some point, usually at the height of the dry, recurrent obstruction that is summer, or in prolonged barrenness, in the very heart of harsh occlusion, there comes a hint of rain, or seed, or rebirth—as in the final verse of the text, cited earlier, with its emblematic image of the "handful of seeds sown in the monsoon."[49]

One lamp, by burning out, lights another. The king who gives away the world receives back the world's riches. The curse that promises death from grief also, by the same token, promises an heir. The deserted city reclaims its distant king and is reborn. The bracelet that is lost in the Sarayū River is restored together with a *nāginī* who gives birth to the next king (16.72–17.1). The final watch of the night brings the clarity that precedes dawn (*paścimād yāminī-yāmāt prasādam iva cetanā* [*prāpa*], 17.1). Every year a luxuriant springtime dries out in the baking heat of *grīṣma*, which finally opens to the monsoon. The falling away of old leaves is the necessary prelude to the emergence of the vine's new buds (*purāṇa-pattrâpagamād anantaraṃ lateva saṃnaddha-manojña-pallavā*, 3.7). Kingship itself seems to have this same cycle—repeated emptying or blocking followed by refilling or release—built into it. More important, the king lives through the repeated struggle that comprises the inner logic of time. For time, as Bhartṛhari tells us—perhaps less than half a century after Kālidāsa—*is* precisely this constant tension between occlusion (*pratibandha*) and release (*abhyanujñā*).[50] Time is nothing like an even flow of identical, measured units. It constantly stalls and restarts, slows down and accelerates.[51] Blocking and unblocking are two

49. Kālidāsa seems in general to be fascinated with *grīṣma*—the culmination of his seasonal series in 19.37-47—and with the transition to the rains, especially the month of Nabhas: see also 3.3, 3.12 (also *Śākuntala* Act 1).

50. Bhartṛhari, *Kālasamuddeśa* (*Vākyapadīya* 3.9) 4–5, 15.

51. Bhartṛhari, *Kālasamuddeśa* (*Vākyapadīya* 3.9) 24, 35.

faces of the process that allows us to count time and to know it. Without them we could not perceive it at all, and notions of "before" and "after" would be hopelessly scrambled.[52]

This is not the place to enter into an analysis of Bhartṛhari's understanding of time. Elsewhere I have argued that there is a relation between certain basic notions of the *Vākyapadīya* and *Abhijñānaśākuntala*; the link between *Kālasamuddeśa* and the *Raghuvaṃśa* is, in my view, if anything even stronger. Suffice it to say that the *Raghuvaṃśa* seems to share with Bhartṛhari the sense of time as marked both by this recurrent, tension-filled rhythm or pulsation and by a range of uneven intensities. Indeed, any given moment can be intensified by dilation (perhaps a kind of attention to complexity?).[53] Moreover, time, at least in its manifest aspect, tends to repeat.[54] Perceptible time involves sequence, and sequence, for Bhartṛhari, is always somewhat suspect; but what repeats in temporality is not so much a regular (perhaps somewhat illusionary) sequence (for example, past–present–future) but rather this uneven movement of occlusion and release, deceleration and break-through, or, teleologically, of potential ripening under conditions of blockage and desiccation.[55] Aging or decay, incidentally, are classed under *pratibandha*-occlusion (and the commentator Helārāja naturally adds "drought" to this named category).[56]

Blocking and release, or the consistent tension between these forces, might also be said to inhere in the poetic praxis that Kālidāsa pioneered. These vectors are there in a large majority of the verses,[57] just as they seem active in the scheme of the *Raghuvaṃśa* as a whole, in its characteristic movement through the long line of kings and princes. We have already mentioned certain prevalent syntactic aspects of this pattern (see section B), and we can now expand the list to include, along with syntactic suspense, *Sperrung* (in its various forms), more generalized tendencies toward temporal dilation and deceleration, on the one hand, but also toward temporal compression, telescoping, and contraction, on the other. In both cases there is an intensification of experienced reality, an enhanced

52. *yadi na pratibadhnīyāt pratibandhaṃ ca notsṛjet/ avasthā vyatikīryeran paurvâparya-vinākṛtāḥ// Vākyapadīya* 3.9.5.

53. *Vākyapadīya* 3.9.65; also 3.9.73, on *vṛddhi-yoga*.

54. According to one view cited by Bhartṛhari in 3.9.53: *atītam api keṣāṃ cit punar viparivartate*.

55. On ripening, a basic concept in Bhartṛhari's vision of temporality, see 3.9.16. Helārāja, too, is profoundly concerned with temporality as the medium of a seed's ripening into maturity: see his commentary on 3.9.29, inter alia.

56. Bhartṛhari 3.9. 24.

57. Though not so much in those sections that are more like straightforward narratives, such as *sarga*s 4 and 11, where we can see a continuity with Aśvaghoṣa's style.

autonomy of the moment, and a certain "thickening" of perception, which is forced to come to grips with apparent syntactic jumbling and delay, with iconic repetition or mirroring (for example, in syntax and figuration), and with the kind of complex modular compounding that we discussed. In other words, the Kālidāsa-style *kāvya* regularly undoes the straightforward linear progression of narrative; it builds a strong tension into the individual stanza, breaking up the syntax and separating normally contiguous elements in recurrent, definable patterns, which we might attempt to parse geometrically or topologically. I would not hesitate to call the result "three-dimensional"—the direct effect of this heightened complexity, regular syntactic and semantic suspense, and the nonlinear mapping or modeling of reality.[58] In general, these patterns, which also operate in the larger units of the *sarga* and segments of clustered *sarga*s, tend to reproduce the internal rhythm of *pratibandha* and *abhyanujñā*, suspense, occlusion, and release.

The true isomorphism of Kālidāsa's *mahākāvya* is with this deep pulsation, the rhythm of royal time itself. It is not really a matter of theme at all. Indeed, our most serious mistake is to think of early *kāvya* as primarily "discursive" in some familiar sense of the word.[59] (Much later, some *kāvyas* became discursive, even novelesque—but that is another story). While each work requires study on its own terms, I argue that the *Raghuvaṃśa*, one of the great paradigms for *kāvya*, is not so much "about" time in relation to kingship, or kingship as an embodiment of temporality, as it is an actualization of the consistent pulsation of temporality as experienced in a culturally specific mode. This is how modeling works: a model composes reality in segments that both reduce and reproduce the large-scale coordinates and dynamic forces operating outside it. Operations on the model thus replay ongoing operations on the wider, less condensed level.[60] They may also impact upon or mold these outer forces, as is regularly the case in Indian ritual, where the model often expands to subsume anything theoretically outside itself. What is the fire-altar that recomposes the scattered pieces of Prajāpati if not the restored cosmos itself? What is *kāvya* if not an intensified version of reality, perfectly capable of replacing ordinary experience by virtue of the autonomizing action of imagination, as Mammaṭa insists? A text like the *Raghuvaṃśa* is an intra-linguistic exercise useful for acting *in* or *on* the world.

58. Thus this early *kāvya* initiates a process that eventually produces the three-dimensional *citra-kāvya*s of the medieval period. Yet Kālidāsa's *kāvya* has nothing of the encoded quality that we find in later *kāvya* texts.

59. As Pollock 2003, 44 also implies: "Clearly, *kāvya* was not something read for the plot—or perhaps for any simple discursive content. Other ends were sought..."

60. See Handelman 1990, 23–31.

There will be effective spin-offs of this basic orientation. In all likelihood, the poem generates, and is meant to generate, the brilliant energy of kingship, Śrī, in the course of exploring the continuous transfer of Śrī from one king to the next.[61] It also serves the mutual determination and self-formation—perhaps we should say self-projection—of fathers and sons, or kings and princes.[62] In this sense it continuously produces a king who is his father's son, or self—*not* the normative king of the *dharma-śāstra* but rather an aestheticized, emotional being. On another level, it offers a series of moving laments for time-driven kingship and dying kings or queens; also an implicit promise that out of intense obstruction and the emptying out of a dying reality will come new seed. But such elements, however we wish to regard them—as themes for meditation, triggers for ritual effects, or as the poet's own special domain of consequential action—apparently derive from the more general modeling of temporality in a singular pulsation. Listening to the text as a whole, we experience time as an uneven, continuous (nonlinear) spiral of emptying and filling, contraction and dilation, each phrase continuous with, indeed, necessary to and contained within, the other. It is this pulse that constantly repeats itself throughout the poem and that offers a basis for that characteristic "thickening" of perception and experience that we call *alaṅkāra*.[63]

The underlying rhythm runs right through the text and can be heard or seen on all levels. Kālidāsa sometimes even addresses it directly, as in the following verse in which the Ayodhyā goddess describes her deserted city:

kālântara-śyāma-sudheṣu naktam itas tato rūḍha-tṛṇâṅkureṣu/
ta eva muktā-guṇa-śuddhayo 'pi harmyeṣu mūrchanti na candra-pādāḥ//
(16.18)

At night moonlight, pure as pearl,
fails to come fully alive on the palace walls
now overgrown by grasses here and there,
their once-white plaster blackened
by the shifting power of time.

This "shifting power" is not a random movement but has a regular, musical pulse. That is why the poem reproduces itself so consistently, and why each episode subtly reenacts the main rhythms of its predecessors. I believe mathematicians call such forms of growth or self-reproduction "gnomonic"—each new

61. See earlier, section B3; also 12.15–16, 13.67, 14.24, 18.8.

62. See 18.11, 18.24, and so on, and discussion of the *suprabhātam* segment, section C.

63. In south Indian ritual contexts, *alaṅkāra* is always the thickening or intensification of a deity's presence as he or she emerges into perceptibility.

unit or layer precisely repeating the shapes and dynamics of the previous ones, like the concentric rings of a tree-trunk or the patterned whorls of a shell. Again, such repetition has little to do with themes, though it has everything to do with syntax, phono-aesthetics, metrics, and figuration and with the potential isomorphisms that obtain among them. The *Raghuvaṃśa* is thus gnomonic, three-dimensional, expansive, effectual, consistent in repetition, unified across its various levels, model-like in operation, and driven by an audible, clearly intelligible, musical pulsation.

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3

Baking Umā*

Gary Tubb

Both the modeling of a pulsating pattern of time pointed out by David Shulman in his essay on the *Raghuvaṃśa* as well as the use he described of modular structures and related techniques to carry out this modeling are equally present for Kālidāsa's earlier *mahākāvya*,[1] the *Kumārasambhava*.[2] In fact, now that Shulman has pointed them out to us, they are if anything easier to trace in that earlier poem, both because of its unusual brevity—the *Kumārasambhava* is probably the only one of the great *mahākāvya*s that can comfortably be read in its entirety in a single sitting—but also because of its narrower focus. Unlike the *Raghuvaṃśa*, it deals not with generation after generation of parents but with the process of generation of a single pair of parents, and there too not with any parents but with Pārvatī and Śiva, who are, as the opening verse of *Raghuvaṃśa* also reminds us, the parents of us all.[3] This same couple is present in the marrying of every couple,[4] and so their union is the model, once and always again, for every union.

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1. The priority of the *Kumārasambhava* can be shown by comparing the details of passages that occur in more or less in the same form in both poems; see Tubb 1982.
2. I refer to verses in the poem by the numbering in Kale's 1981 edition.
3. A point made also in *Kumārasambhava* 6.80 and elsewhere.
4. *Kumārasambhava* 7.78.

Given this subject, it is no surprise that the notion of splitting and regeneration is also present in the *Kumārasambhava*, and indeed the poem speaks not only in philosophical terms of the primordial splitting into male and female for the purpose of procreation (2.7) but also in mythological terms of the goddess's heavenly suicide which led to her regeneration on earth (1.21).

But the special identity of the joint protagonist also leads to a prevailing tone of greater optimism than in the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Although here too the movement toward reunion involves arduous self-purification—a theme Kālidāsa revisits in other works—we cannot help feeling a certain confidence in the prospects for God's success in this endeavor. And the poet takes pains to reassure us in this hope, reminding us almost playfully, for example, that the goddess is Śiva's eternal wife,[5] or that Śiva is her constant husband,[6] and, perhaps less playfully, that of all repositories of power it is Śiva alone whose store is unfathomable (2.58).

A. Patterns of Innovation in the *Mahākāvya*

The emphasis is therefore not so much on emptying as on recharging, and not so much on loss as on transfer, and throughout the poem the most prominent pattern for the transfer of resources is one of depositing rather than expending. This emphasis is played out through the use of several corollary patterns of great importance in the poem. One is the constantly recurring notion of transfer from heaven to earth, and of the soaking up of celestial energy by terrestrial figures, most notably in the several beautiful passages enacting Pārvatī's status as goddess of the earth.[7] A special form of this, relevant to Pārvatī, but especially prominent in relation to Śiva, is the storing of fire, a pattern that is especially noticeable in the depiction of Śiva's development of a "volcanic" stasis during his meditation in the third canto,[8] and in the final verse of the poem, to which I will return at the end of this essay.

Clearly these patterns reflect not only the process of Pārvatī's growth in her earthly incarnation, but also the deeper theological reality of Śiva and Pārvatī's nature as the transcendent and immanent aspects of God. This is reflected also in concurrent notions such as the relationship between moving and unmoving things, animate and inanimate aspects, souls and nature, that are woven throughout the poem.

5. *Kumārasambhava* 1.21: *satī satī*; and the idea of her birthright is reinforced throughout the description of her childhood.

6. *Kumārasambhava* 7.85: *dhruveṇa bhartrā dhruva-darśanena*

7. Ingalls 1965, 28–29.

8. Ingalls 1976, 24.

The concern for the necessity of internal growth is reflected in the overall structure of the poem, which is arranged in two parallel halves, the first telling of the disastrous attempt to force the union of Śiva and Pārvatī by external means, resulting in the incineration of the Love-god Kāma in a burst of fire from Śiva's third eye, the second telling of the successful winning over of Śiva through Pārvatī's internal effort of austerity. Each half consists of four cantos, the first and third canto in each half dealing with major events (1: Pārvatī's birth, and 5: Pārvatī's maturation; 3: Kāma's destruction, and 6: Pārvatī's wedding), alternating in each half with a second canto dealing with the supporting action of an embassy leading to the main event (2: gods to Brahmā; 6: sages to Himālaya), and a fourth dealing with the results of that event (4: the lament of Kāma's widow; 8: the honeymoon of Pārvatī and Śiva).

This structure is reinforced both by clear metrical patterns and by thematic and narrative parallels throughout, much of which I have detailed elsewhere.[9] Here I will add only that this parallelism, which extends to repetitions of strings of words that make it clear that the poet deliberately consulted one canto when composing the corresponding one,[10] is not so slavish as to preclude other echoes in the poem, such as the revisiting of the rich collection of images in the opening description of Himālaya, not only where one would expect it in the return to his region in the second half of canto 6, but also in the description of the sage at the beginning of that canto. Another example is the strategic repetition of references to slippages in parts of Pārvatī's costume, which serves several parallel purposes.

These echoes are not merely thematic but syntactic as well. For example, the reverent tone in the description of the sanctity and purity of Pārvatī's birthday, is expressed in syntax so uncharacteristically straightforward that when the same structure occurs again in the description of her sanctifying effect on the *tapas*-forest the similarity of tone immediately comes to mind.[11]

9. Tubb 1984, 222.

10. A simple example is *Kumārasambhava* 3.44–46 alongside 7.37–39: "tiger-skin seat, bed of lotuses, black deity."

11. *Kumārasambhava* 1.23:
prasannadik pāṃsu-vivikta-vātam.
śaṅkha-svanânantara-puṣpa-vṛṣṭi/
śarīriṇāṃ sthāvara-jaṅgamānāṃ
sukhāya taj-janma-dinaṃ babhūva //
Kumārasambhava 5.17:
virodhi-sattvôjjhita-pūrva-matsaraṃ
drumair abhīṣṭa-prasavârcitâtithi/
navôṭajâbhyanta-rasā bhṛtânalaṃ
tapo-vanaṃ tac ca babhūva pāvanam //

A fairly subtle way of reinforcing patterns is through the juxtaposition of words, as in the first verse describing Pārvatī's childhood, where she is described as playing with altars of sand on the banks of the Ganges (1.29). The wording of the opening compound in the verse, *mandākinī-saikata-vedikābhiḥ*, recapitulates the association, already active in the poem, of the junction of heaven and earth as a type of holiness, because the word *mandākinī* is properly the name of the Ganges in her celestial form as the Milky Way,[12] and this same triad was introduced in the beginning of the first verse of the poem—describing Pārvatī's father with reference to his loftiness, divinity, and groundedness—and then strengthened a few verses before the present one in the famous *mālopamā* in which it is said that by her he was both purified and adorned, as is a lamp by a bright flame, the sky by the Milky Way, and a scholar by Sanskrit speech—referring to earthly light, heavenly light, and the sacred internal light.[13]

That this same sequence of words is used in several of his other works without reference to the celestial Ganges in particular is not a refutation of the significance of the combination in its original setting, but rather one of many examples that show that Kālidāsa was fond enough of a phrase to recycle it even at the cost of a departure from its first intensity—a phenomenon that helps in determining the sequence in which his works must have been composed. A similar tool is available where whole sequences are repeated, as in the description of the weddings in the two *mahākāvyas*,[14] where in general the only verses not appearing in both poems are those in the *Kumārasambhava* that were originally composed with references so intricately involved in the specific patterns at work in that poem that they could not be salvaged for use elsewhere. A case in point is the rich play on the name of Śiva in verse 7.75, describing the calming of the bridegroom's mind on his being brought together with the bride.

Proper names are used in many other significant ways in the poem—it is no accident, for example, that throughout the fourth canto, containing the lament of Kāma's widow, all the references to Śiva use his name Hara, "the remover," while his name Śaṃkara, "maker of happiness," is not used at all in the poem until the description of the honeymoon in the last canto, where it first appears in the verse describing the first time his hand reached for his bride's waist-knot, and is then used a dozen more times in that canto.

12. *Amarakoṣa* 1.1.49ab (p. 26): *mandākinī viyad-gaṅgā svar-ṇadī sura-dīrghikā.*
13. *Kumārasambhava* 1.28:
prabhā-mahatyā śikhayêva dīpas
trimārgayêva tridivasya mārgaḥ /
saṃskāravatyêva girā manīṣī
tayā sa pūtaś ca vibhūśitaś ca //
14. Tubb 1982.

Such devices, together with several interesting features of the syntax of individual verses, are a crucial part of the work, and will reveal themselves in detail to careful readers of the poem. However, in the space available here, I want to turn to the broader question of the external factors that may have contributed to the innovations that appear in the poem.

B. Kālidāsa and Aśvaghoṣa: Common Origins and Contrasting Visions

I have mentioned the relative priority of the *Kumārasambhava* among Kālidāsa's works. This feature of the poem makes it the logical place to look for explanations of how Kālidāsa's innovative approach to Sanskrit poetry came about, a task made difficult by the scarcity of information on the works of other poets during and before Kālidāsa's time. Here I think the descriptions of the *mahākāvya* form by Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin are useful in their implications. The topoi they list, which Shulman has referred to in his essay as having little to tell us about the aim or achievement of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, are more helpful where the *Kumārasambhava* is concerned. While each topos can be found in that poem, some of them are covered so briefly—the swimming party and the birth of a son, for example, are given only one verse apiece—as to appear vestigial, strongly suggesting that they are included to meet a requirement, and that they were already recognized in Kālidāsa's time, whether śāstrically codified or not, as obligatory parts of a *mahākāvya*.

More interesting is the fact that the early descriptions point more generally to the expectation that the *mahākāvya* will deal with a martial story involving the victory of a hero over his opponent, and in fact the list of topoi itself begins with a number of purely military items. All the early *mahākāvya*s we know of conform fully to this expectation, with the exception of the four earliest surviving examples: Kālidāsa's two poems, and the two earlier *mahākāvya*s of the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa. Here the *Raghuvaṃśa* deviates from the stated norm only in dealing with an entire line of heroes rather than a single one, but the other three poems are exceptions of a very striking and peculiar type: Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, his *Saundarananda*, and the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa all deal with a religious or philosophical theme rather than the traditional martial one. These three poems, together with the *Raghuvaṃśa*, also give unusual attention to the topics of sexual desire, love, and marriage, which in the typical *mahākāvya* are taken up only incidentally during interludes in military action, such as when the warriors break from their marching long enough to throw a drinking party, a swimming party, or a flower-picking party.

I find it difficult not to believe that the traditional form was well established even in Aśvaghoṣa's day, and that his poems were composed not in ignorance of

the standard but in manipulation of it, deliberately twisting it to serve his proselytizing purpose—a choice that he speaks of explicitly at the end of the *Saundarananda*, where he explains why he has turned to the "rules of poetry" (*kāvya-dharmān*) for religious purposes.[15] Again, these rules may or may not have been set down in written treatises in Aśvaghoṣa's time, but they must have been known in some recognizable form or he could not have made such a choice. In his *Buddhacarita* he offers what amounts to a co-optation of the traditional military epic: the spiritual struggle between Siddhārtha and Māra, god of love and death, replaces the usual battle, and suggests that the Buddha's spiritual victory was superior to any military conquest.

The resulting poems proved so powerful that their version of the Buddha's life became standard throughout Asia, complicating the task of tracing the sources of Aśvaghoṣa's work, just as some of the Purāṇic sources for the *Kumārasambhava* have been obliterated by being rewritten in conformity to Kālidāsa's telling of the story. But it is safe to say that speaking of the Buddha's spiritual career as parallel to a kingly one, through the double meanings assigned to ideas such as that of the *cakravartin*, has a long history.[16] What was new in Aśvaghoṣa's work was his appropriation of the *mahākāvya*—apparently already a vehicle of some status in Brahmin circles—as the tool for such a presentation.

Kālidāsa's reappropriation of that tool for Śaiva purposes was equally innovative.[17] I believe it is clear that in the *Kumārasambhava* Kālidāsa borrows the technique of the spiritualized co-opting of the martial epic, and applies it to the Love-god's attack on the ascetic god Śiva. Here, however, the confrontation is a preliminary one, for, as we have seen, in the second half of the poem Śiva is induced to marry Umā by her own austerities. Once again the purpose of the poet is to offer a superior alternative to a received ideal: the Buddha left married life to find victory in meditation, but Umā's perfection in meditation led her and

15. *Saundarananda* 18.63 (tr. Johnston pp. 116–17): "This poem, dealing thus with the subject of Salvation, has been written in the Kāvya style, not to give pleasure, but to further the attainment of tranquillity and with the intention of capturing hearers devoted to other things. For, that I have handled other subjects in it besides Salvation is in accordance with the laws of Kāvya poetry to make it palatable, as sweet is put into a bitter medicine to make it drinkable." Cf. *Buddhacarita* 28.74 (tr. Johnston; Sanskrit text lost, Part 3, p. 124): "Thus this poem has been composed for the good and happiness of all people in accordance with the Sage's Scriptures, out of reverence for the Bull of Sages, and not to display the qualities of learning or skill in poetry."

16. For treatments of the story of Māra in the Saṃyutta Nikāya and elsewhere in the Pāli canon, see Warder 1972, 65–71.

17. Cf. Ingalls 1976, 23—"Kālidāsa had another solution [to the problem of reconciling the human goals of action and goodness], more original and much grander, for it is his personal religious vision. I find no comparable expression of it in earlier Sanskrit, though it was to be imitated many times in the centuries that followed."

Śiva back into a cyclically reactualized marriage of cosmic significance, in which the earthly is not rejected but purified, not left behind but drawn up into a living union with the transcendent.

The *Kumārasambhava* is thus a parody of a parody (if the kind of co-option of poetic form already described may be called parody when put to such serious use)—a sort of double cross, a further twist, as clever as the first but dependent on it. And Kālidāsa's works contain many other responses to Aśvaghoṣa's poems. Aśvaghoṣa's pervasive influence on Kālidāsa, already well documented by others in many of its details,[18] was due in part to how much they had in common, and before I say more about the contrasts between the two poets, I want to mention three things they shared.

First, they were both products of a Brahmin education, and Brahmin ways of thinking were crucial to them both—although of course in different ways, since Aśvaghoṣa was speaking from the standpoint of a convert to Buddhism, while Kālidāsa remained a spokesman for the ideals of Brahmin culture.

Second, the two poets had common roots in the Śaiva religion, as we know for Aśvaghoṣa from Chinese sources and for Kālidāsa from the constant testimony of his works. We shall see that Kālidāsa appears to have been especially sensitive to any remark by Aśvaghoṣa that touches on Śaiva matters.

Third, each of the poets seems to have felt allegiance to a city that was the center of a cycle of stories important in Sanskrit literature. For Aśvaghoṣa the city was his hometown of Ayodhyā (or Sāketa, as the Buddhists called it), where the stories were of course those of Rāma. Aśvaghoṣa is diligent in supporting the claim that the Buddha's family was an offshoot of the dynasty in Ayodhyā, and the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on his works is very powerful. For Kālidāsa the city was his beloved Ujjain, where as he himself has told us the stories were those of Udayana, the dashing king whose exploits were prominent in the *Bṛhatkathā* and seem to have provided the plots for a rather large percentage of the earliest Sanskrit plays, including Kālidāsa's own *Mālavikāgnimitra*.[19]

18. Nandargikar (1891) gives 34 pages of parallels, although he uses them to claim that Kālidāsa must have lived before Aśvaghoṣa, placing Kālidāsa in the second or third century BCE. In any case the number of unmistakable parallels, ranging from entire passages, such as that of the women rushing to the windows, to single images, such as that of stopping with one foot held frozen in the air (*Saundarananda* 4.42, *Kumārasambhava* 5.85), are sufficient to guarantee influence in one direction or the other, and for the relative timing I agree with the widely-accepted placement of Kālidāsa at the beginning of the fifth century (see Ingalls 1976, 1) and of Aśvaghoṣa in the first or second century.

19. See Singh 1977, 74 for an explanation of how the plot of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, usually described as a pure invention of Kālidāsa's, is actually drawn from the story of Udayana and Bandhumatī (or Mañjulikā), with the names changed to match those of historical characters.

I believe the figures of Rāma and Udayana are important for our two poets, not as direct sources of plots, but because they embody a conflict between two ideals of behavior concerning love and duty, a conflict that I see as central in the differences between the two poets, springing as it does from their fundamental religious differences on the nature of engagement in the phenomenal world. In the simplest terms, the contrast is this: Rāma clung to his outward duty even when it conflicted with his inward love for his wife; Udayana held fast to his love for his wife even when it conflicted with his outward duty.

In Rāma's case the wife was of course Sītā, and we all know the story of how he had her taken away to be left in the forest when he learned that the public suspected her of impurity. In Udayana's case the wife was Vāsavadattā, the princess from Ujjain, and the basic story is this: while Udayana was happily married to Vāsavadattā it became politically necessary for him to form an alliance with the kingdom of Magadha by marrying another princess. Udayana refused, and his prime minister was forced to fake Vāsavadattā's death in order to bring about the second marriage.

Rāma's story feeds directly into Aśvaghoṣa's theme in the *Buddhacarita* of the prince who turned away from family and pleasure to follow the true dharma. But Udayana's story would work against it, especially in the version in which Udayana became an ascetic on learning of Vāsavadattā's alleged death, only to reverse that decision when later he learned the truth.[20] This is the exact behavior that Aśvaghoṣa condemns in the strongest terms in the *Buddhacarita*, where when Siddhārtha's father gives him a list of men who returned from asceticism to married life, Siddhārtha replies, "They do not prove your case, for those who have broken their vows are not fit to speak on matters of dharma."[21]

The importance of this theme for our two poets could hardly be greater given the fact that every work by either poet has to do in some important way with the abandonment of a wife by her husband, or at least with some other form of spousal separation. In the hope of providing a clearer picture of how Kālidāsa's own stance on the matter led him to rework much that he read in Aśvaghoṣa, I would like to return for a closer look at each of the three spheres of common background I have already mentioned—Brahmin culture, Śaiva religion, and Rāma as a model of behavior.

20. This is the version told, for example, in the eighth-century *Tāpasavatsarāja*, regarded by the great Śaiva literary critic Abhinavagupta as the most attractive and noble of plays. If Kālidāsa had known the work he might well have felt the same, given his interest in the theme of husbands who deserted their wives. One of the most poignant elements in a play that Kālidāsa did know, the *Svapnavāsavadattā* of Bhāsa, was that when the scheming minister had to conceal the true identity of Vāsavadattā, the story he used was that she was a sister of his whose husband had run out on her.

21. *Buddhacarita* 9.77, trans. Johnston Part 2, p. 139.

To begin with the topic of the Brahmin lifestyle: both poets clearly seem to have felt a nostalgic fondness for the holy setting of the Brahmin religious commune, a setting best known to readers of Sanskrit literature through Kālidāsa's depiction of Kāṇva's ashram, where Śakuntalā was raised, but one that is described just as lingeringly and lovingly by Aśvaghoṣa as well. It is, of course, a setting that Aśvaghoṣa ultimately renounces, not only because of the sacrificial ritual, the maintenance of which was the principal activity in such communities, but also because of the married state that the Vedic ritual requires.

Kālidāsa's treatment of Kāṇva's ashram is relevant even beyond his borrowing of particular points from Aśvaghoṣa in composing his play, the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. The very existence of the play itself may have sprung from a remark by Aśvaghoṣa,[22] who mentioned that the Buddha's ancestors had been taken under the care of the Brahmin sage Gautama, as had been done before by the Brahmin sage Kāṇva for Śakuntalā's son Bharata when his father had abandoned them, and by Vālmīki for the sons of Sītā in similar circumstances—references to the two stories then taken up by Kālidāsa as subjects of his greatest play and of his longest *mahākāvya*. What seems to have been intended by Aśvaghoṣa as a list of Kṣatriyas who abandoned wife and son—with no harm done, he would claim—became for Kālidāsa the basis of an entire career devoted to the theme of abandoned spouses and of subsequent purification through suffering, leading finally to fruitful reunion. It is as if he had taken up Aśvaghoṣa's brief remark as a challenge.

The same might be said of the stimulus for the production of Kālidāsa's shorter *mahākāvya*, the *Kumārasambhava*, which may well have been provoked by another aside by Aśvaghoṣa that Kālidāsa took as a challenge. This brings us to the second of our three topics, that of Śaiva religion, for the remark I have in mind is one made by Aśvaghoṣa in the course of describing Māra's attack on Siddhārtha.[23] He describes the Love-god as puzzled by the fact that his arrows have no effect on Siddhārtha, when they had been so successful against Śiva—are they really the same arrows, or could it be that this young man is so far superior to the god Śiva? Kālidāsa's entire poem could be seen as a refutation of what must have seemed to him a very impertinent comment.

The more general role of Śaiva references in Aśvaghoṣa is to provide vehicles for the depiction of outrageously excessive religious behavior. One can hardly

22. *Saundarananda* 1.22–27.

23. *Buddhacarita* 13.16,
śailêndra-putrīṃ prati yena viddho
devo 'pi śaṃbhuś calito babhūva /
na cintayaty eṣa tam eva bāṇaṃ
kiṃ syād acitto na śaraḥ sa eṣaḥ //

read Aśvaghoṣa's description of Māra's hideous troops, with their ash-grey color, monkey-like matted hair, pendulous earlobes, necklaces of snakes, and so on, without suspecting that Pāśupatas and similar Śaiva types are being called to mind.[24] This scene in the *Buddhacarita* culminates in the appearance of a terrifying woman, black as a raincloud and with a skull in her hand, dancing around without restraint in her attempt to seduce the sage, as the mind of a dilettante dances across religious traditions[25]—another remark that must have seemed provocatively snide to Kālidāsa, and which is to be contrasted both with his treatment of Umā's disciplined self-restraint in her seeking of Śiva, and with his description of a well-behaved Kālī riding in Śiva's marriage procession (7.39).

Umā's heroic role is also relevant, in an unexpected way, to the topic of using Rāma's story as a model. Aśvaghoṣa, as I have mentioned, had based his treatment of the hero in the *Buddhacarita* in no small part on the figure of Rāma. It is not surprising that many of the details of Aśvaghoṣa's depiction of him find clear echoes in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, but what is surprising is that Kālidāsa applies most of these details not to Śiva but to Umā.

Parallels to the description of Prince Siddhārtha begin with the account of Umā's lineage and birth at the start of the poem and proceed through events, such as her perturbation in the palace and desire to leave home to practice austerities, the attempts by her family to dissuade her, the visit by Śiva—parallel to the visit by the King of Magadha in Aśvaghoṣa's poem—with his talk of improprieties, and so on. The effect is to make her a functional hero in the poem, an actual *nāyaka* in the traditional language of a Sanskrit plot analysis. As far as I know this is an unprecedented development in a *mahākāvya*.[26]

Yet I have called Umā *a* hero, not *the* hero, for there are some other features in Aśvaghoṣa's depiction of the prince that are applied to Śiva by Kālidāsa, the most inescapable of them being the attack on Śiva by the god of love, and the famous scene of the women rushing to the windows to see him as he passes by on the main street. It is more accurate to say that Umā and Śiva constitute the joint hero in the poem, parts of an eternal pair.

A more direct way in which Kālidāsa provides a contrast to Aśvaghoṣa's use of the Rāma story is in Kālidāsa's own *mahākāvya* dealing with Rāma and the line of kings to which he belonged, the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Here again we find a shift

24. *Buddhacarita* 12.21–26ff.

25. *Buddhacarita* 13.49,
strī megha-kālī tu kapāla-hastā
kartuṃ maharṣeḥ kila citta-moham /
babhrāma tatrâniyataṃ na tasthau
calâtmano buddhir ivâgameṣu //

26. I have explored this topic in detail in Tubb 1984.

from the usual martial emphasis of the *mahākāvya* to a marital emphasis, as a simple perusal of the usual names of the 19 cantos in the poem, as given in printed editions of Mallinātha's commentary, will show—nearly every one of them has to do with marriage and related matters, and wives are prominent throughout in other easily observable ways as well. In fact we have here a reversal of the standard pattern of the *mahākāvya*: here it is the military elements that are slipped in as incidental descriptions along the way, as when Dilīpa fights with a lion as part of an observance for fertility that he and his wife are performing together, or when Aja fights with Indra on his way home from his betrothal in a brief interlude before his wedding. Even Rāma's war with Rāvaṇa, the focus of the bulk of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic, is dwarfed by the attention paid to Sītā in the surrounding portions of Kālidāsa's poem.

But what is most striking in the *Raghuvaṃśa* is that the affection shown by these kings toward their wives, and depicted so movingly in passages such as Aja's lament for Indumatī, is almost totally absent in Kālidāsa's treatment of Rāma, a character who in the hands of other Sanskrit poets such as Bhavabhūti is credited with the most elaborate and vocal yearnings for his missing Sītā. This omission was pointed out by Daniel Ingalls, among others;[27] he concludes that Kālidāsa could not believe that Rāma really loved his wife, and so he refused to say he did.

To this observation and to the list given by Ingalls and by Walter Ruben before him of the several reprimands of Rāma inserted into the story by Kālidāsa,[28] I would add one further way in which Kālidāsa manages to convey his opinion of Rāma's treatment of his wife, and that is the scene of the ghost of Ayodhyā, a scene David Shulman has already spoken of in his essay. Canto 15 of the *Raghuvaṃśa* ends with the ascension of Rāma to heaven, followed by the citizens of Ayodhyā, leaving the earth in the hands of Sītā's sons, Kuśa and Lava. Early in the next canto the elder son Kuśa is visited in the middle of the night by the wretched apparition of a woman wearing the dress of a wife whose husband is away from home. She explains that she is the spirit of the city of Ayodhyā, and that her lord Rāma had abandoned her when he returned to heaven, leaving her without a husband. She gives the new king a hauntingly beautiful description of herself in which she contrasts the city's former graceful glory with its present desolation. The next morning Kuśa moves his capital back to Ayodhyā, thus repairing his father's lapse, and then proceeds to find himself a bride of flesh and blood as well. Their son is born in the first verse of the following canto. The situation of Ayodhyā embodied—abandoned and miserable—implies that Rāma has failed in his duty, both as a king and as her husband.

27. Ingalls 1976, 22.

28. Ruben 1956, 49, cited in Ingalls 1976, 22 n. 24.

C. Prevailing Images in Kālidāsa's Vision of Purity and Power

These images—of heaven and earth, of earth as a woman, of a woman as fertile source of power—are as typical of Kālidāsa as the themes of abandonment and restoration that are also present here, and I would like to conclude by looking very briefly at how each of these three images has been a part of Kālidāsa's reworking of Aśvaghoṣa.

First, the image of movement between heaven and earth. I have already mentioned Kālidāsa's fondness for descriptions of heaven being brought down to earth. For the Buddhist Aśvaghoṣa the most significant fact about the gaining of heaven is that it will inevitably be followed by the loss of heaven. His favorite image—and judging by the citations the favorite of his readers as well—is the vividly evoked picture of people falling violently down from heaven once the merit that took them there has been expended. He delights in portraying bejeweled ladies falling head over heels, shrieking with woe as they plunge back down to the sordid earth.[29]

In contrast, Kālidāsa presents such movements in positive terms, not as disasters but as instances of fruitful migration, a sort of gracious colonization of the earth from above, as in this verse from his *Meghadūta*, which also records his interest in the stories of Udayana, and which I give in the translation by Ingalls:[30]

> When you come to Avanti
> where the villagers know the stories of Udayana,
> You must pay a visit
> to the broad and royal city of Ujjain.
> Those who built it must have come from heaven
> where, as their merit lessened,
> they garnered what was left,
> and left the sky to build this heaven on earth.

So, as we have seen before, for Kālidāsa the earthly is not inalterably opposed to the divine, but rather is capable of being sanctified.

A similar contrast applies to the image of earth as a woman. Here too Aśvaghoṣa is fond of a strikingly negative image, which he uses at the points in

29. For example, *Buddhacarita* 14.36–41; *Saundarananda* 6.2–3 and 11.48–50. The most frequently cited of all Aśvaghoṣa's verses is *Buddhacarita* 14.41, repeated verbatim as *Saundarananda* 11.50: "The dwellers in Paradise fall distressed to earth, lamenting, 'Alas, grove of Caitraratha! Alas, heavenly lake! Alas, Mandakini! Alas, beloved!'" (tr. Johnston, p. 208 in the *Buddhacarita*; see p. 65 of his *Saundarananda* edition for a slightly different translation).

30. Ingalls 1976: 20; the verse is *Meghadūta* 30. Cf. the description of Umā's home town Oṣadhiprastha in *Kumārasambhava* 6.37, and of the city of Mathurā, built by one of Rāma's sons and destined to be the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, in *Raghuvaṃśa* 15.29.

the poem when the Buddha achieves his major victories—his enlightenment and the dropping of his body.[31] At these moments, Aśvaghoṣa says, "the earth staggered like a drunken woman," a statement obviously opposed by Kālidāsa's depiction of Umā's attainment of meditative perfection, where she becomes, as Ingalls wrote in his essay on Sanskrit poetry and Sanskrit poetics, "a sort of double, an anthropomorph of the earth." Here is his translation of two verses from the *Kumārasambhava*:[32]

Still sat Umā though scorched by various flame
Of solar fire and fires of kindled birth,
Until at summer's end the waters came.
Steam rose from her body as it rose from earth.

With momentary pause the first drops rest
Upon her lash then strike her nether lip,
Fracture upon the highland of her breast,
Across the ladder of her waist then trip
And slowly at her navel come to rest.

Finally, in the image of woman as fertile source of power we have, appropriately enough, a topic on which our two poet's contrasting views are presented at the very end of what were probably their last poems.

Aśvaghoṣa ends his *Saundarananda* with the words of the Buddha to Nanda, who has abandoned the domestic life. The Buddha tells him that he need give no further thought to his wife, for eventually she, like him, must lose her interest in the home and leave that life behind.

Kālidāsa ends his *Raghuvaṃśa* with a passage that has been deeply troubling to many modern readers, but which Shulman has redeemed through his sensitive explanation of it in his chapter. The last canto of the poem tells the story of the sensual King Agnivarṇa, who, whatever we may think of him—and with Shulman's help I now think more of him than before—did manage, like so many other men in Kālidāsa's works, to fulfill the role of leaving behind his pregnant wife. But he left her on the throne, and left us with a hopeful image, incorporating once again the image of Mother Earth, bearing within her a growing seed planted in the hot season.

In the preceding chapter Shulman suggests we compare the love-games of Agnivarṇa with the love-play of Śiva and Pārvatī in the last canto of the *Kumārasambhava*. I will conclude by suggesting that we also contrast this final verse with the final verse of that other poem, in which Śiva not only stays in the

31. *Buddhacarita* 14.87 and 23.71.
32. Translation from Ingalls 1965, 28–29.

presence of his wife, but continues to display an active love that, like the great fire at the bottom of the ocean, remains unslakable.[33]

This brings us back to Shulman's wonderful explanation of the role of modeling in Kālidāsa's poetry, which makes both these endings, so often considered incomplete, inevitable. The *Raghuvaṃśa*, in modeling an active, pulsating process, cannot end in the birth of a prince, because the process of the succession of generations continues; even more so the *Kumārasambhava*, in modeling god's love, cannot culminate in the production of the prince because the outpouring of God's bliss is in its very dynamism a culmination eternally present.

The verse encapsulates a creative power that would be played out in a rich variety of patterns and echoes throughout Kālidāsa's other works, to great effect—the play about Śakuntalā and the poem of the Cloud Messenger have become far better known throughout the world than the *Kumārasambhava*, and the *Raghuvaṃśa*, justly regarded as the work of a more mature poet, stands above the shorter poem in the traditional canon. But it is in the *Kumārasambhava* that we see Kālidāsa's innovative genius in its first appearance.

How far those innovations are related to the external background beyond the role of Aśvaghoṣa's poetry is a topic requiring further work; it has been suggested, for example, that Kālidāsa's religious vision coincides with innovations in Indian architecture.[34] For now my purpose here has been simply to throw some light on the intensity of this vision as it works within the poetry itself.

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33. *Kumārasambhava* 8.91:
sama-divasa-niśītham saṅginas tatra śaṃbhoḥ
śatam agamad ṛtūnāṃ sārdham ekā niśeva /
na sa surata-sukhebhyaś chinna-tṛṣṇo babhūva
jvalana iva samudrântargatas taj-jalâughaiḥ //

34. Ingalls 1976: 26.

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4

On Beginnings

Introductions and Prefaces in *Kāvya*

Herman Tieken

A. Introduction[1]

In a recent article I drew attention to the occurrence of the word *mādhurya* in Aśoka's fourteenth Rock Edict.[2] This edict serves as an epilogue to the preceding 13 edicts in providing some reflections on the "genre" of royal missives. With this *mādhurya* I argued that we are dealing with an early instance of a technical term known from the later *kāvya* poetical tradition. On the basis of the occurrence of the term in the Aśoka inscriptions it was next suggested that the *kāvya* literary tradition is heir to, or a continuation of, a scholarly tradition regarding royal missives developed by clerks employed in the royal chancery. This conclusion is corroborated by the close association of *kāvya* with the court.

It is indeed not difficult to see how the careful, self-conscious style of *kāvya* could have developed out of the art of composing diplomatic letters. In addition to that, this finding connects *kāvya* specifically

1. This contribution, which was originally written in Jerusalem in 2004, has been brought up to date in the end of 2011. The author would like to thank Stephanie Jamison for her stimulating comments on the earlier version of this article.

2. Tieken 2006. Unfortunately the translation given there of the particular passage in the edict is not correct. *athi cu heta puna puna lapite* (variant *vute*) *tasa tasa aṭhasa mādhuliyāye* should be translated: "On the other hand here (in these edicts) some things have been said over and over again because of their sweetness."

with communication through writing. While we may assume that in Aśoka's time written communication was a relatively recent phenomenon and while it is not unlikely that this mode of communication may have existed side by side with the oral delivery of royal instructions for quite some time through messengers, in the light of the later developments it may be argued that once the possibilities, advantages and prestige of a written communication—and administration—were realized, royal attention went almost entirely in that direction. It now appears that *kāvya* had its origin in, or was part of, this particular trajectory. In fact, with its long, complicated metres, its many linguistic tricks and its convoluted images, *kāvya* indeed looks typically like written literature, with writing providing the necessary time to plan the text on the part of the author, and time to study and analyze it on the part of the reader.[3] For all that, I do not wish to rule out the possibility that *kāvya* was occasionally composed on the spot or could be appreciated when recited. The point I want to make here is that the style of *kāvya* is easier to explain as the outcome of developments in written literature meant to be read.

In what follows I take up the question of the "roots" of *kāvya* again by following yet another avenue. The earliest *kāvya* texts available include so-called *mahākāvya*s, namely the *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda* by Aśvaghoṣa (first century AD), plays, such as Aśvaghoṣa's *Śāriputraprakaraṇa*, and a prose inscription, namely the Girnār inscription of Rudradāman (mid-second century). Later, the number of genres multiplied, with, among other texts, inscriptions in verse and prose, lyric poetry, so-called *vaṃśa*s or genealogical poems, prose romances, and historical novels. I will try to show that among all these genres the *mahākāvya* was the first, that is to say, that it was the *kāvya* poets' own invention. I argue that the other genres are the result of attempts on the part of these poets to adopt, and *kāvya*-ize, existing types of compositions of poets and performers from different milieus than their own.

Next, I will argue that *mahākāvya* represents an elaboration in *kāvya* style of the epic. At that point an attempt is made to combine this idea with the one which places the beginning of *kāvya* in the royal chancery by trying to answer the question of what might have been the relationship of the scribes and the clerks employed there and the epic tradition. By way of conclusion the scenario for the origins of *kāvya* developed here will be compared to one recently put forward by Stephanie Jamison, who sees in *kāvya* a direct continuation of Vedic literature.[4]

3. For Pollock, writing is a fundamental component of *kāvya* (Pollock 2006, 5 and passim).

4. Jamison 2007.

B. Types of Beginnings

A striking feature of the first generation of epic *kāvya* texts, or *mahākāvya*, is the absence of any kind of introduction. The texts immediately begin with the story. In this they stand apart from the other literary genres, which have "proper" introductions and prefaces. A closer look at the contents of these introductions and prefaces suggests that in *mahākāvya* the poets play, as it were, a home game, while in the other genres they are treading on foreign ground. In order to make that clear, I first present an overview of the beginnings in different *kāvya* genres. In doing so I base myself mainly on the earliest examples of the genres involved, in which the following five main types may be distinguished.

Type 1

As said, the first *mahākāvyas*, or *sargabandhas*, immediately begin with the story itself. A good example is Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (fourth or fifth century AD), which begins with the word *asti* "Once upon a time there was". Examples by an earlier writer are Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda* (first century). A special case is formed by Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* (seventh century) and Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* (sixth century), both of which begin with the auspicious word *śrī*. In the *Śiśupālavadha* the last verse of each *sarga* likewise contains the same word *śrī*. In the *Kirātārjunīya* each *sarga* ends with a verse containing the equally auspicious word *lakṣmī*. In fact, retrospectively the occurrence of the word *śrī* at the beginning of these two texts might put a different light on the name Gautama with which Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarananda* begins.[5] For information on the authors and titles of these texts we have to fall back on colophons, which, strictly speaking, are not part of the texts proper.[6]

In later *mahākāvyas* the situation has changed. For instance, the *Jānakīharaṇa* (seventh or eighth century), which begins with the words *āsīd avanyām*, is, like the *Śiśupālavadha* (see n. 6), concluded by a set of four verses providing a genealogy of its author Kumāradāsa. These four verses are again followed by a colophon mentioning the author, the title of the text, and the number of the

5. Unfortunately it is impossible to establish with certainty if something like this is also found in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* as the beginning of this text is only available in Chinese and Tibetan translations.

6. Note that the *Śiśupālavadha* ends with a section of five stanzas in which the author describes his own lineage. He does not, however, mention his own name.

final chapter. The *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (seventh century), which opens with the words *abhūn nṛpo*, ends with a so-called *kāvyapraśasti* of four verses, in which the author professes, among other things, that his text can be enjoyed only by the highly learned. In the last verse he mentions that he (*mayā*) had composed the poem in the town of Valabhī during the reign of King Narendra, Śrīdhara's son. However, the author's name is known to us only from the colophon. Yet another case which may be mentioned here is Ratnākara's *Haravijaya* (ninth century). This text opens with three verses, in which Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā respectively are asked to protect the reader, after which the story begins with the word *asti*. The text is concluded with what has been labeled a *granthakartuḥ praśastiḥ*, which, among other things, mentions the name of the author and the title of the work.

Type 2

At the other end of the spectrum of the earlier verse *mahākāvya* we find prose romances. The latter are preceded by proper prefaces, which, as they are in verse, are clearly set apart from the texts proper. The earliest examples of these prefaces are found in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* and Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, which, however, are both relatively late texts (probably seventh century). In each of the prefaces we may distinguish three sections. Thus, they begin with several verses praising the gods or asking them to protect the readers. Henceforth such verses at the beginning are referred to as *maṅgala* verses. This is followed by a set of verses, in which, among other things, unjust criticism is anticipated. In what follows this topic of the second section will for brevity's sake be referred to by the term "apology." In the *Kādambarī* this is followed by the genealogy of the author, in the *Vāsavadattā* by a mere reference to the name of the author. Immediately after this, the story proper begins, with the word *abhūd* in the *Vāsavadattā* and with *āsīd* in the *Kādambarī*. It should be noted that neither preface supplies the title of the work. In fact, they do not even give an indication of the topic. In addition, the two texts differ in the identification of the type of work they belong to, the *Kādambarī* identifying itself as a *kathā* and the *Vāsavadattā* as a *prabandha*.

A text type that may be included in this category is the anthology. Probably the earliest example of an anthology is Hāla's *Sattasaī*, a collection of 700 erotic *āryā* verses in the so-called Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit. The *Sattasaī* is generally taken to have been compiled in the beginning of our era. This early dating is based on the ascription of the compilation to the Sātavāhana King Hāla. However, the first reference to the *Sattasaī* is found only in the relatively late *Harṣacarita* (seventh

century). Furthermore, as I have tried to show elsewhere, the *Sattasaī* presupposes a text like the *Kāmasūtra* if not the *Kāmasūtra* itself.[7] This means that the *Sattasaī* may have to be dated much later than has been done so far. In fact, it is uncertain if the text is earlier than, for instance, Kālidāsa.[8] Like the two romances discussed earlier, the *Sattasaī* opens with a *gāthā* exhorting the reader to honor (*ṇamaha*) Śiva and Gaurī, who are portrayed in an erotic situation here. This *gāthā* corresponds to the *maṅgala*. In the second *gāthā* it is said that though the *Sattasaī* is in Prakrit, this is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, the *Sattasaī* is claimed to be superior to the *Kāmatantra*, which refers to learned treatises in Sanskrit on the topic of *kāma*. This *gāthā* corresponds more or less to the apology section. Finally, in the third *gāthā* the compilation of the anthology is ascribed to the Sātavāhana King Hāla. With the fourth *gāthā* the text proper begins. As can be gathered from this description, the beginning of the *Sattasaī* resembles the prefaces discussed earlier. At the same time, its preface differs from the ones in the *Kādambarī* and *Vāsavadattā* in that it consists of verses in the same meter as those of the text proper. As a result there is in this case no clear formal break between the "preface" and the beginning of the text itself.

Type 3

The prologue of a Sanskrit drama opens with one or more *maṅgala* verses. This is followed by a conversation between the stage manager and an actress, usually his wife, in which the name of the playwright and the title of the play are mentioned. In some cases the occasion for the performance is specified as well and some information on the nature of the play is provided.

The prologues in this category are not detachable from the text of the play proper as in the case of prose romances. On the contrary, they are an indissoluble part of it. As I see it, the prologue is meant to convey the message that the text one is about to read is not a text but a performance to be watched.[9] The earliest example in question, a play by Aśvaghoṣa, dates from the first century.[10] Unfortunately the beginning of the play is missing, as a result of which we are unable to know if it ever had a prologue. The *Svapnavāsavadatta* and *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, two plays by Kālidāsa's predecessor Bhāsa, do have prologues, but the two plays are known only through relatively late south Indian adaptations.

7. Tieken 2001a, 72ff.

8. The attribution of the compilation of the anthology to the Sātavāhana King Hāla seems to be part of the fictional world created in the text; see Khoroche and Tieken 2009.

9. See Tieken 2001b.

10. The number of plays by Aśvaghoṣa which have survived has probably to be reduced to one; see Tieken 2010a.

As a result the first certain evidence of prologues is found with Kālidāsa, whose oeuvre includes three plays.

Type 4

The situation in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, one of the earliest known historical novels (seventh century), seems to show a combination of the traditions as found in dramas, on the one hand, and prose romances, on the other. *Harṣacarita*'s preface, which altogether consists of 21 verses, follows the pattern of prose romances up to a certain point. Thus, it opens with three *maṅgala* verses. In the remaining 18 verses the poet informs us that if despite many illustrious predecessors his poor self has decided to tell the history of Harṣa, this is basically done out of loyalty to that king (the apology part). Immediately after that the story begins (*evam anuśrūyate purā kila*). If we compare this to the prefaces of prose romances we see that the information about the author is missing. However, this is precisely what the first part of the text proper is about, which informs us in quite some detail of Bāṇa's genealogy, his relationship to King Harṣa, estranged at first but finally patched up, and how he was brought to tell the adventures of Harṣa, or at least part of them.

While the preface to the *Harṣacarita* does not supply the title of the work, it does give an indication of the topic. The *Harṣacarita* appears to be not just a story about Harṣa's adventures, but a story about a poet telling the adventures of his patron. The story of Harṣa's adventures proper begins only somewhere in the middle of the third chapter (p. 94), starting with the words *śrūyatām asti*, "listen, there was" In Vākpati's *Gauḍavaho* (eighth century) basically the same pattern is found, though information about the author, or rather, the teller of the story, has been integrated into the text proper in a much more subtle way.[11]

Another variant is seen in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (twelfth century), a historical novel in verses about the south Indian King Vikramāditya. In the eighteenth and final canto of this work the poet relates how he had arrived from Kashmir, where he was born, to Kalyāṇa in south India at the court of King Vikramāditya. In contrast to the *Harṣacarita* the poet's "autobiography" has thus been placed at the end of the poem.

Type 5

The format of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*, which consists entirely of verses divided into *sargas*, agrees with that of the *mahākāvya*. However, as to its contents, we are dealing with a unique work, a *vaṃśa*, which tells the story of the Raghu

11. On the relationship between the *Harṣacarita* and *Gauḍavaho*, see Tieken 2001c.

dynasty through 30, or rather 31 generations.[12] The only other examples of the genre are found in Buddhist literature (*Dīpa-* and *Mahāvaṃsa*). The *Raghuvaṃśa* starts with a *maṅgala* verse in which Śiva and Pārvatī are praised. Next, the author contrasts the greatness of the solar dynasty to the pettiness of his own intellectual abilities. In the first of the two final verses of the introduction he announces that he will nevertheless describe the lineage of that dynasty: the very virtues of the Raghu dynasty compel him to commit this rashness. Finally, he recommends the result of his efforts to learned, literary men. After this the work proper begins with a verse describing Manu, the second hemistich of which contains the word *āsīt*.

In this introduction the author refers to himself in the first person (I am not referring to *vande* in the *maṅgala* verse here, which is quite common, but to *vakṣye* in verse 9). Though this is not uncommon (see, for instance, the preface to the *Harṣacarita* as well as the end of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*), the *Raghuvaṃśa* differs in this from prose romances, which refer to the author in the third person. In fact, the beginning of the *Raghuvaṃśa* resembles more the situation in plays than the one in prose romances. Thus, like the prologue to a drama the introductory matter appears to be part of the text itself. In any case, the introduction is in the same *anuṣṭubh* meter found in the first *sarga*. In this connection it should also be noted that while the text proper begins with the word *āsīt*, this word is not found at the very beginning of the verse but in the middle. It is almost as if Kālidāsa was varying on a traditional pattern here.

Another work that may be mentioned along with Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* is his *Meghadūta*. At first sight it is tempting to include this poem in the category of works that lack an introduction, as it begins abruptly with the word *kaścit* "[There was] some [*yakṣa* who ...]". The greatest part of the *Meghadūta* consists of the words with which this *yakṣa*, who had been banished for having neglected his duty, directed a cloud to his wife left behind in his native town Alakā. In the beginning of the *Meghadūta* the situation of the *yakṣa* is briefly described. Only with verse six does the *yakṣa*'s address to the cloud begin. In a way the beginning of the *Meghadūta* resembles that of, for instance, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, except for the fact that the *yakṣa* is not just an objective, professional teller of someone else's adventures but is personally involved in the situation. In fact, the point may be lying precisely in this difference, in that the *Meghadūta*, at least as far as its setting is concerned, aligns with the lyrical tradition, in which each poem requires a fictional speaker and an imaginary situation in order to become convincing.

12. See Tieken 1989.

The patterns discussed so far may be summarized in the following scheme:

TEXTS WITHOUT PREFACES OR INTRODUCTIONS				
Early *mahākāvya*s:				
Saundarananda, Kumārasambhava			story	
Later *mahākāvya*s:				
Bhaṭṭikāvya, Jānakīharaṇa			story	epilogue
TEXTS WITH INTRODUCTIONS				
Śakuntala		introduction	story	
Raghuvaṃśa		introduction	story	
Meghadūta		introduction	story	
Gauḍavaho		"introduction"/story[13]		
Vikramāṅkadevacarita		story/"introduction"[14]		
TEXTS WITH PREFACES				
Kādambarī, Vāsavadattā	preface		story	
Sattasaī	preface		"story"	
TEXTS WITH PREFACES AND INTRODUCTIONS				
Harṣacarita	preface	introduction	story	

C. The Storyteller in the Text and His Relationship to the External Author

The function of the "introduction" in the *Harṣacarita* may be compared to that of the prologue in Sanskrit drama. In both cases the author is written into the text as its author or as the bard who told the story for the first time. However, in the *Harṣacarita*, the text as a whole, that is, the introduction and the story proper, is preceded by a preface in verse. The main part of the preface is dedicated to the poet's apology. I think one may legitimately ask why in the case of the *Harṣacarita* the apology was not integrated into the first part of the text as well. In fact, it even seems possible to detect a contradiction between the preface and the introductory part. In the preface, Bāṇa is reluctant to tell the story, fearing that he will not be able to match the literary excellence of his predecessors in the field. In the work proper it is modesty of another kind, namely the heroic feats

13. With the term "introduction" I refer here to the remarks made by the storyteller throughout the telling of the story, on which, see Tieken 2001c.

14. Reference is made here to the final chapter, in which the author, or rather, the teller of the story, relates how he had arrived at the king's court. As indicated earlier, this part corresponds to the opening of the *Harṣacarita*, in which we are informed, among other things, how Bāṇa had arrived at Harṣa's court.

performed by Harṣa, which are so many that it is impossible to tell them in a lifetime.

Whatever is exactly the case here, by introducing a second Bāṇa (the author next to the bard or storyteller) the preface seems to destroy the fiction created in the text proper.[15] It is tempting to conclude that the preface in verse to the historical novel is a later addition or else the result of a conflation of two independent traditions, a historical novel with its own fictional introduction and texts with prefaces.

This brings to mind one of the most widely known texts about storytelling, namely Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita* (eighth century). In the *Daśakumāracarita* the storyteller is not a poet or courtier, but the *yuvarāja* and his nine companions. At a certain point during their *digvijaya* these ten young men get separated from one another. In the end they all come together again and each of them is invited to tell what happened to him in the meantime. In their capacity of storytellers, the ten young men in the *Daśakumāracarita* stand on a par with Bāṇa in the *Harṣacarita*, and as in the latter case, their "family histories" and their relationship to one another are dealt with in the first part of the text. But in contrast to the *Harṣacarita*, the *Daśakumāracarita* does not have any additional prefatory matter (except for a *maṅgala* verse), though in this case, in fact, the text assumes an external, all-knowing author besides the ten young men, who is responsible for the work as a whole. However, as in the case of the type-1 *mahākāvya*s, the name of the author is mentioned only in the colophon, though it is practically given away in the *maṅgala* verse, which abounds in instances of the word *daṇḍa*. As far as I know there is no evidence of an attempt to change the situation in the *Daśakumāracarita*; apparently the text as we have it, that is, without any preface, was considered complete and self-sufficient.

However, there are scholars, such as Lienhard, who maintain that the first part of the *Daśakumāracarita*, the so-called *pūrvapīṭhikā*, has been added to it after the original beginning had been lost.[16] In this connection the *Avantisundarī* is mentioned, which corresponds to the first part of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and might have formed the original beginning of the *Daśakumāracarita*. Unlike the latter text, the prose *Avantisundarī* does have a full-fledged preface in verse. Thus, it opens with a *maṅgala* verse praising Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu. This is followed by verses in which earlier poets are praised. Next, still in verse, Daṇḍin's genealogy is given. Immediately after that the prose text starts, beginning with Daṇḍin's travels and his arrival at the Pallava court and ending at the point where the tale of Avantisundarī begins (p. 17). The *Avantisundarī* seems to

15. It should, again, be mentioned that in the preface the name of the author does not occur.
16. Lienhard 1984, 236.

present us with precisely that external, all-knowing author who had been absent from the *Daśakumāracarita*.

All this, however, does not necessarily mean that the *Avantisundarī* is more original than the *Daśakumāracarita* or that the latter is only an abstract, lifted out as it were from the former work. In this connection it should be noted that the evidence put forward in support of the secondary nature of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* of the *Daśakumāracarita* is slender, or else of an impressionistic nature. Furthermore, on closer consideration, the *Avantisundarī* is a most peculiar text. Thus, anyone who after reading about Daṇḍin's genealogy, his travels, his arrival at the Pallava court, and, next, his expulsion and subsequent return, would expect something political as the trigger for Daṇḍin's storytelling, will be disappointed. The story about Avantisundarī is meant to explain the miracle of the transformation of a lotus into a *vidyādhara*! Moreover, while using partly the same story material, the *Daśakumāracarita* and *Avantisundarī* seem to present two entirely different genres. Thus, while the *Daśakumāracarita*, for all the fantastic elements found in it, is basically a political novel,[17] the *Avantisundarī*, for all the political intrigues it contains, starts off as a fantasy tale. In fact, this seems to mark the beginning of the *Avantisundarī* almost definitely as a hybrid composition. For, while by beginning with a report on Daṇḍin's travels and his final arrival at the Pallava court it aligns with the historical novel (*Harṣacarita* and *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*), through the story of Avantisundarī it resembles the fantasy tale (*Vāsavadattā* and *Kādambarī*).[18] For all we know, the relationship between the two compositions might well be the other way around from what has been assumed so far, the *Avantisundarī* being a later elaboration of the *Daśakumāracarita*, or part of it, and the fantasy tale. For our purpose it is important to note that the absence of any preface to the *Daśakumāracarita* cannot automatically be attributed to, for instance, the loss of part of the text, but might present the text's original form.

In connection with the phenomenon of the preface it should be noted that two of the types of works in which it is found, the historical novel and the fantasy tale, seem to have appeared on the scene relatively late. In general it might be argued that a genre is earlier than its first attested examples. However, in this case there is some evidence to suggest that the historical novel and fantasy tale, as genres, are indeed not much older than their earliest examples and that these two genres did not yet exist, at least not within the *kāvya* tradition, in Kālidāsa's time. The composition of that poet's oeuvre bears this out.

17. See Brisson 1984, Porcher 1985 and 1986, and deCaroli 1995.

18. Note that the title of the *Avantisundarī* is of the same type as that of the *Kādambarī* and *Vāsavadattā*.

If we compare Kālidāsa's oeuvre with that of, for instance, Bhavabhūti or Harṣa, what strikes the eye is the diversity of the types of works or genres represented in it. Bhavabhūti's oeuvre consists only of plays, three in number. Likewise, we possess three plays by Harṣa. As I have shown elsewhere,[19] the plays of each of these playwrights appear to be related to each other through a specific theme: in Bhavabhūti's plays that of women being kidnapped and rescued and in Harṣa's plays that of people getting lost and being found again. Something similar is also found in Kālidāsa's works, which each in their own way deal with the phenomenon of the curse. However, while with Harṣa and Bhavabhūti we see variations of one and the same theme in works of the same genre, with Kālidāsa we see one and the same theme, that is, the curse, elaborated upon in works belonging to different genres, namely a *mahākāvya*, a *mahākāvya*-like work, dramas, and a short lyrical text. And the variation attested goes even further. Thus, as already indicated, the *Kumārasambhava* is clearly a different type of work than the *Raghuvaṃśa*;[20] and the same applies to his three dramas, the *Śakuntalā* which has a story based on epic mythology, the *Mālavikāgnimitra* which is a historical drama, and the *Vikramorvaśīya* which is experimental in containing *dhruvā* songs. Given this situation it may be asked why, if at the time the historical novel or the fantasy tale had already existed, they were not included in Kālidāsa's oeuvre as well. Admittedly, a curse might have been difficult to give a place in a historical novel (as it was in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, in which case the curse was relegated to the play within a play) but the stories of the fantasy tales actually thrive on curses.

Though this line of argument can hardly be applied to the other text type with a preface, namely the anthology, it is tempting to conclude that, with the historical novel and fantasy tales, the preface is a relatively late phenomenon in the *kāvya* tradition, probably only dating from the time after Kālidāsa. As for the preface in the *Sattasaī*, it should be noted that, tradition apart, there is no evidence that this anthology is indeed older than Kālidāsa (see footnotes 7 and 8).

D. The Significance of the Absence of an Introduction in *Mahākāvya*

One way to find out what it means for a work to have no introductory matter is to look at the kind of information contained in the introductory parts of the texts that do have them. I suggest that for the moment we leave out of consideration the preface, which might well be a later phenomenon. Starting

19. For more details, see Tieken 2001d and 2005a.

20. Both texts have in common, however, that they end seemingly abruptly. On this phenomenon, see Tieken 1989.

with the dramatic genre, besides mentioning the playwright, the prologue refers to the performance of the play. While reading the text of the play one is to imagine that it is performed on stage. The introductions to the *Harṣacarita* and *Daśakumāracarita* likewise present us with storytellers at work or occasions at which stories are told. And the introduction of the *Raghuvaṃśa* evokes a bard about to recount (*vakṣye* "I will relate") the *vaṃśa* of the Raghu family.

All these beginnings presuppose live-performances of the texts concerned, namely the performance of a play in front of an audience, the telling of the king's adventures in the midst of a group of friends and relatives, or the presumably public recitation of the dynasty's *vaṃśa*. Such performances seem to be a far cry from the world of the *kāvya* poets who, as has been suggested above, were writers composing slowly and in silence and not extempore performers. In the introductions the authors of the texts cast themselves in roles, which originally were not theirs. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is tempting to argue that in *mahākāvya*, which does not have a beginning, the poets were being themselves, using or re-using material and techniques which they could by right consider their own. In the plays, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, and the historical novel, which presuppose live performance traditions by professional actors, panegyrists and story-tellers we would be dealing with attempts by these same poets at *kāvya*-ization or bowdlerization of certain existing (popular) genres.[21]

E. *Kāvya* and Epic

If with *mahākāvya*s the poets were indeed on familiar ground, they also produced something new. What, then, is it that they were doing? In what follows I suggest that they were experimenting with the epic tradition by adapting it to a new literary mode.

A striking feature of *mahākāvya* are its long and complex meters as well as their enormous variety within a given text. The distribution of the meters coincides with the division of the texts into *sarga*s, or chapters, each of which has a particular meter of its own. Usually, the final verses of a chapter are, however, in a different meter. By presenting a story divided into "chapters" and by being

21. What is said here in connection with the origin of *kāvya* should be distinguished from later developments, when Sanskrit dramas were actually performed, and *mahākāvya*s recited, and submitted to the judgement of live audiences. Furthermore, the type of textual variants found in *kāvya* texts seems to suggest that these texts were learned by heart and recited from memory. Even nowadays one may find pandits who are able to compose Sanskrit verses on the spot or to follow the recitation of *kāvya* verses. As far as I see it, one should be careful, though, to project that state of affairs uncritically on the beginning of *kāvya* poetry. In any case, my argument is that features characteristic of *kāvya* have their origin in written literature.

composed in verse the *Mahākāvya* closely resembles the epic.[22] At the same time, by its use of complicated meters, *mahākāvya* is as far removed from the epic as is possible. Thus, while the epic uses a short and relatively free meter, the *śloka* or *anuṣṭubh*, which, we are to believe, is typical of extempore, on the spot composition, the *kāvya* meters are generally much longer and have a rigidly fixed distribution of long and short syllables. These two features presumably coincide with a slow process of composition by writing. As I see it, in *mahākāvya* we might be dealing with the creation of a new kind of "epic" poetry which as a written variety was as far as possible removed from the presumably oral epic poetry.[23] The use of a standardized, classical language instead of the "irregular" epic Sanskrit and the introduction of an elaborate style instead of the straightforward epic style were part of this literary experiment.

F. The Scribes' Background

What does these poets' preoccupation with the epic genre tradition tell us about the origin of the clerks or scribes employed in the king's chancery from whom they seem to have descended? There are some indications, which seem to suggest that the epic tradition as presented by, for instance, the *Mahābhārata* used to be part of the repertory of the ritual specialists officiating at the large-scale royal sacrifices. In this connection I would like to go back to a recent study by me of the *Mahābhārata*, in which I suggested that the story of the *Mahābhārata* portrays the competitive and self-destructive world of the potlatch.[24] In this world every act of liberality and sacrifice is seen as a challenge and has to be retaliated by an act of even greater liberality and sacrifice. In the *Mahābhārata*, the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas find themselves caught in such an ongoing competition. At the same time there is no gift that cannot be surpassed and there is no final winner. For even after one has given the greatest gift of all, namely one's own life, the competition does not end with that. It just begins all over again. Thus, before the Pāṇḍavas start on their final departure, they hand over Hāstinapura to Yuyutsu, a bastard son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. At the same time they place Arjuna's great grandson Parikṣit on the throne. In this way they create a similar situation to the one with

22. One may wonder if the division of one of the earliest *mahākāvya*s, namely Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarananda*, into 18 *sarga*s, which number corresponds to the division of the *mahābhārata* into 18 books, is coincidental.

23. Most verses in an epic tradition stand on their own. In *mahākāvya* we may come across strings of verses, each of which contain a relative clause depending on the main clause, which may follow or precede. This appears to be the metrical counterpart of the descriptive embedded sentences typical of *kāvya* prose style. At the same time, however, the stringing of verses does involve a radical break with epic literature in verse.

24. Tieken 2005b. See also Tieken 2009.

which the *Mahābhārata* started, with the Kauravas as the legal heirs to the throne but the Pāṇḍavas being the actual rulers.

In its portrayal of such a society, the *Mahābhārata* seems to reflect the same concern which preoccupied the authors of the *śrautasūtra*s, who, as shown by Heesterman, resolved the "problem" by taking the sting out of the sacrifice by removing the rival.[25] There is also some more concrete evidence that the epics were indeed preserved in the milieu of these ritual specialists. Thus, while the epics abound in stories about bards who are invited to sacrificial undertakings to recite epic stories, or who drop in on them,[26] reminiscences of such incidents are found in the so-called *pāriplava* of the *aśvamedha*. However, in the *śrautasūtra* version of the horse sacrifice the recitation of the *itihāsa*s and *purāṇa*s is not carried out by bards but by the officiating priests (*hotṛ*s) themselves.[27] The epics appear to have been part of the curriculum of the ritual specialists.

To sum up: as mentioned, in the course of the sacrifice the priests recited epic stories, a task which in the pre-*śrauta* period was performed by wandering bards. When these same priests subsequently started to take care of the king's correspondence, they brought with them, beside their theory of sacrifice,[28] the epic tradition. When these scribes subsequently started experimenting with the writing of literature in the style and language developed for diplomatic correspondence, they began, I would say almost naturally, with the literature with which they themselves were most familiar, the epic.

The scribes' concern with epic poetry in a way helps to understand their step from formal letters and legal documents to fictional, imaginative literature. A question, which in this context immediately arises is, however, why they did not experiment with Vedic poetry, with which they must have been familiar as well. Later I discuss a recent, alternative scenario for the origin of *kāvya* which indeed traces it back directly to the Vedic poetic tradition. Here I only want to note that Vedic poetry is not literature in the strict sense of the word. It consists of powerful mantras with which it is possible to influence the cosmos and life itself.

25. Heesterman 1993, passim. It may be interesting to note that later thinking about Vedic ritual, which tries to remove all forms of potential conflict from the sacrifices, or rather, the communal sacrificial feasts, agrees with Aśoka's rejection of *samāja*s expressed in Rock Edict 1, even though in the latter case the reason given for disapproving these meetings is not the destructive nature of the sacrifices or the obvious law-and-order problem they create but the need to slaughter so many animals at such occasions.

26. At the very beginning of the *Mahābhārata* we see how Ugraśravas arrived at Śaunaka's 12-year sacrifice, where he repeats Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* as he had heard it being recited by Vaiśampāyana at Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice. Note also that Kuśa and Lava make their appearance and recite the *Rāmāyaṇa* at their father Rāma's *aśvamedha*.

27. Chakrabarti 1989.

28. This (investigative) theory of sacrifice (*mīmāṃsā*) fathered the later juridical argumentation (see Lingat 1967: 163ff.), which may be supposed to have another occupation of the king's scribes.

More importantly, precisely because of the power attributed to these mantras one does not meddle with their style and language. Epic poetry, on the other hand, for all its ritual and mythological significance, has always had an element of diversion: during the year-long *aśvamedha*, when the princes were following the horse which had been set free in the countryside, bards helped those who had stayed behind to pass away the time by telling stories. Furthermore, the epic stories dealt largely, if not exclusively, with royal concerns. It was the type of stories the court was familiar with and interested in, and in which it could recognize much of itself.

However, *mahākāvya* is not a direct successor of the epics, that is to say, it did not succeed the epics in their ritual function. Instead, it seems to belong exclusively to the "new" position of the scribes in the royal chancery, who in the poems bear witness to their linguistic and stylistic skills. Beside letters, these skills found expression in inscriptions (in particular the *praśastis*) and in literary texts. It is unclear, however, what role these literary texts played in court life. They may have featured in contests between poets organized by kings and other rich patrons mentioned in later sources. One such contest, a so-called *kavisamāja* or *kāvyagoṣṭhī* presided over by the king, is described in Chapter 10 of Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*.[29] An earlier description of contest is found in *Kāmasūtra* 1.4.14–17. It concerns a so-called *ghaṭānibandhana*, that is, a contest between bards (*kuśīlavas)*, which, however, could equally well be taken to refer to one between *kāvya* poets. The event is announced (it takes place on a day made known, *prajñāte'hani*) and organized by the *nāgaraka*, the *Kāmasūtra*'s "hero," and it involves performances, or "spectacles" (*prekṣaṇaka*), by wandering bards (*kuśīlavāś... āgantavaḥ*) before an audience of *niyuktas*. The latter term is somewhat enigmatic, but from what follows in the text it becomes clear that it refers to people who are well versed in the bardic art themselves. For, if for some reason (illness or a busy schedule) no bards show up, persons from the audience could take over their role. Vice versa, if no audience shows up, the bards, or at least some of them, could take a seat in the audience.[30] The bards get a regular fee on the second day, but may be invited by the audience to perform another time. Interestingly, the guests who have joined the meeting—and most probably the reference is simply to the audience—receive prizes and honors as well. A similar picture arises from the description of the so-called *kavisamāja* of the

29. See Tieken 1992.

30. Note that the passage in the *Kāmasūtra* is aptly concluded with the phrase *iti gaṇadharmaḥ. gaṇa* in *gaṇadharma* is a synonym of *saṃgha*, which, according to Pāṇini 3.3.42, denotes a meeting of equals (*saṃghe cānauttarādharye*).

Kāvyamīmāṃsā: the evaluation of the poems is left to an audience, which consists entirely of poets. While the *ghaṭānibandhana* is presided over by the *nāgaraka*, the *kavisamāja* is presided over, and organized, by the king; the meeting takes place at his invitation at his court. The role of the *nāgaraka* and the king was basically that of distributing presents and honors. On these occasions the court could present itself as a centre of competition, that is, as the place that of all types of people and of all kinds of professions was capable of attracting the most excellent performers.

G. The Proliferation of Genres within the *Kāvya* Tradition

As suggested earlier in this chapter, the *mahākāvya*, in any case as far as its format is concerned, was the result of a kind of makeover of the epic. In their use of the epic, the poets were falling back on a literary tradition which was part of their own repertory. As may be gathered from the present form of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, the scene of bards dropping in on sacrifices was, as fiction, already a part of these epics as they presumably circulated among ritual specialists and scribes. Therefore, it did not do for the poets to introduce this element of the epic a second time in their *mahākāvyas*. Interestingly, Kālidāsa in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, in contrast to the *Kumārasambhava*, by way of introduction did present a poet about to recite the text, while genealogies, or *vaṃśa*s, were part of the epic tradition as well. I think this situation underlines, at least in Kālidāsa's time, the difference between the epics, which include genealogies side by side with the main theme, which is sacrifice, on the one hand, and genealogical texts like the *Purāṇa*s, which deal with genealogy as an independent theme. Apart from its story, moreover, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, which shares all the characteristics of a *mahākāvya*, such as the division into *sarga*s each with its own meter and different meters at the end of it, seems to show the dominance of the *mahākāvya* format in the *kāvya* tradition in Kālidāsa's time.

It has also been argued earlier that in Sanskrit plays the poets were adapting a living performance tradition to the new style of writing developed and maintained by them in the royal chanceries.[31] For all we know this must have

31. The supposed authors' backgrounds in sacrificial (investigative) theory, or *mīmāṃsā* referred to earlier (see also n. 28)seems to have left their trace on Sanskrit drama in a particular way. A recurring theme in Sanskrit drama is the king's love affair with a princess and his marriage with her as a second wife beside his first one. Marriage is politically important, as it provides the king with an important ally in the person of the princess's father. What is most striking in all this is the passive role of the king. In the end his desires are fulfilled, one is tempted to say, almost despite himself. The king's desire is the most important thing, its fulfillment happening

taken place almost simultaneously with their experiments with the epic format. Aśvaghoṣa, the earliest known *mahākāvya* author, for instance, wrote at least one play as well as the *Śāriputraprakaraṇa*.[32] The script of a Sanskrit drama is made up of conversation in prose interspersed with verses. The verses are generally of the same type as those found in *mahākāvyas*. A peculiarity of the drama, however, is the great variety of the meters of the verses, and that successive verses rarely have the same meter. If in Sanskrit drama we are indeed dealing with a written, polished-up version of an original performance tradition, what these verses corresponded to in the original folk-tradition of drama largely remains a puzzle. In this connection it should be noted that the verses in Sanskrit drama are texts to be recited; only very exceptionally are they sung (for example, *Śakuntalā* v. 103), in which case this is expressly mentioned. Singing seems to have formed a regular feature of a performance. However, the songs concerned, called *dhruvās*, were not included in the script and were not part of the characters' roles. They functioned as interludes, serving to fill up a lull in the action, for instance, during the exits and entrances of the characters. The *dhruvās*, some examples of which have been transmitted in *Nāṭyaśāstra* XXXII, are in what seems to be a kind of Aphabhramsha, which is supposed to represent, or imitate, the local languages spoken by the actors.[33] A "performance" of a Sanskrit play would thus have involved conversation in prose, recited verses, and songs. It is not at all certain if we may apply this multi-colored picture just like that to the underlying dramatic tradition. For instance, it may be asked if the verses in the scripts of Sanskrit dramas correspond to songs in the original performance tradition.[34]

almost automatically. In this connection one may compare *Nāṭyaśāstra* 19. 9: *autsukyamātrabandhas tu yad bījasya nibadhyate / mahataḥ phalayogasya sa phalārambha iṣyate*. This presentation of the situation may well be an echo of ideas such as those found in later *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* concerning the fundamental unity of ritual action (*karma*) and aim (*artha*). In this way in the plays the king's sexual desires, as the most obvious example, are accounted for in a scholarly way.

32. On a scene from the *Śāriputraprakaraṇa*, which was previously identified as part of a separate play, see Tieken 2010b.

33. Tieken 2001a, 180ff., and 2008.

34. As I have discussed elsewhere (2010a) songs as part of the characters' roles in "Sanskrit" drama are found for the first time only in the fourteenth-century play *Gorakṣavijaya* by Vidyāpati. Side by side with Sanskrit drama there were, however, all kinds of so-called minor dramatic types composed in Prakrit or Apabhramsha, which contained songs and involved dancing. As I see it, in contrast to these minor dramatic types, which were full of songs sung like arias (that is, with little regard for the meaning of the words), the effect of Sanskrit plays, with their often complicated plots, depended mostly on the texts.

H. The Preface

In the course of the history of *kāvya* certain texts came to be introduced by prefaces. At first sight we seem to be dealing with a relatively late phenomenon, found for the first time in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* and *Harṣacarita*. In the case of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* the preface turns the storyteller in the text into the author of the text. If the function of the preface is indeed, among other things, to introduce an external author, as discussed earlier, in the *Harṣacarita* the problem is that the latter, historical author turns out to be the same person as the storyteller featuring in the text. In this connection I want to draw attention to the prologues of Sanskrit drama. In these prologues the director of the dramatic troupe announces the play that is about to be performed before the audience present. In doing so he also mentions the name of the playwright. However, in the case of the *Mṛcchakaṭika* the author Śūdraka, who is not only responsible for the script of the play but also for that of the prologue, is in that same prologue said to be already dead! The situation in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* may be contrasted with the one in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*. In the case of this play more was needed than a dead author. In the prologue Kālidāsa is expressly said to be a contemporary, living author, which is emphasized by mentioning presumably famous predecessors. As I have tried to show elsewhere, this reference to Kālidāsa as a living person most likely contains a hint at the topic of the play, which, for once, does not involve heroes from epic mythology, but real, historical people. This particular prologue appears to have several elements in common with later prefaces: the name of the author, a reference to earlier authors in the field, and a kind of apology (verse 2). Apparently all this was needed to present a living author. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find out if in Kālidāsa's time prefaces such as we find later were already in vogue and if in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* he was playing with the phenomenon, or that we are dealing with a pure coincidence here.

I. Epilogue

If certain Sanskrit compositions were in need of an apology, this is no less the case with the present study. What is presented here is not much more than the outline of an idea. It is basically an attempt to formulate some hypotheses for my own further investigations into the beginnings of *kāvya* literature. These investigations are to a large extent determined by the idea that *kāvya*, which started as a by-product of clerks responsible for the king's correspondence and administration, was in origin written literature exploiting, and experimenting with, the possibilities offered by writing.

In this chapter the clerks' background has been filled in with more details. Thus, it is argued, they appear to have had close contacts with ritual and legal specialists employed at the royal court, if, as a class, they had not themselves evolved from these specialists. As ritual specialists they were the custodians of the epic tradition. Yet, as members of the court administration they must have already been far removed from the wandering bards who used to recite epic poetry at royal sacrifices. As scholars they will have been, or they considered themselves to be, a class apart from these and similar wandering performers, including drama actors.

The scenario mentioned here of the origin of *kāvya* differs from the one drawn up quite recently by Stephanie Jamison.[35] The poetic techniques of *kāvya* and the *kāvya* poets' "verbal exuberance" are traced back by her directly to the Vedic poetic tradition.[36] The link in the connection was, according to her, the *praśasti*, or panegyric poetry, which, as the product of *kavis*, had clear roots in the Vedic tradition. Jamison suggests that the typical *kāvya* style had its basis in *praśasti*s and was gradually extended to other genres of *kāvya*, in doing which she has no need of intervening scribes or the epic. As to the intervening scribes, however, I think that their role is demonstrated by the Aśoka inscriptions, which testify to the presence of an element of the later poetical tradition of *kāvya* in the royal chancery. The supposed role of the epic is a more complicated matter, because the first evidence of *kāvya* is Buddhist poetry of the lyric mode in Pāli found in the *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā*. The latter two texts are generally dated well before the beginning of our era and, as has been demonstrated by Lienhard, show a number of points of agreement with later secular erotic poetry in Prākrit (for example, *Sattasaī*) and Sanskrit.[37]

The *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā* apart, other early *kāvya* texts all belong to Buddhist literature. They include, apart from stray quotations, Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍītikā* and other early Buddhist *campū*s. The first examples of the *mahākāvya* are Aśvaghoṣa's (first century) *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda*,

35. Jamison 2007. This is a publication of a series of lectures given at the Collège de France in Paris in 2004. I refer in particular to the end of the third lecture (pp. 115–18) as well as to the fourth lecture (pp. 119–50).

36. Jamison leaves out of consideration elements like the stories of *kāvya* or their protagonists, human and divine, which as found in *kāvya* do not seem to derive directly from the Vedas but seem to have been filtered through the epic (Jamison 1996: 137). In the case of vocabulary the situation is not different. As has been argued by Renou, Vedic words in *kāvya* are not borrowed directly from the Vedas but from the subsequent scholarly tradition represented by the *Nighaṇṭu* and *Nirukta*; Renou 1959, 398–401.

37. Lienhard 1975. See also Jamison 2006, 143–46, who also draws attention to several instances of the word *kāvya* in Pāli texts.

the stories of which are based on the Buddha's biography. The first *mahākāvya*s (including dramas) dealing with themes derived from the "Hindu" epics are those by Kālidāsa (fourth or fifth century).[38]

On the basis of the evidence of the *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā*, Jamison surmised that "between the Rig Veda and the dawn of *kāvya* proper" the *kāvya* literary tradition had survived at courts, which made use of Middle Indic languages.[39] However, as I have tried to show elsewhere, available evidence for courts using a Middle Indic language needs considerable fine tuning; in both known cases (Aśoka and the Sātavāhanas and their successors in the Deccan) the influence of Sanskrit seems to have been present in the background.[40] Contrary to Jamison's, in my scenario *kāvya* was in all its phases intimately connected with Sanskrit and in particular with brahmanic culture. Buddhist *kāvya* literature would represent an early offshoot of that tradition, which as far as *kāvya* in Sanskrit is concerned is attested almost simultaneously. The odd-one-out here is the so-called *kāvya* literature in Pāli (in particular *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā*). In fact, this might be a reason to have a closer look, if not at the date of the compilations then at their interpretation as examples of *kāvya*.

The fact that the earliest examples of *mahākāvya* are Buddhist texts may well be a trick played by history.[41] In any case, Aśvaghoṣa's *mahākāvya*s are full of material derived from, for instance, the epics.[42] As I see it, this may well be explained with reference to the composition and orientation of the chancery concerned, which was probably only marginally affected by Buddhism. For royal rituals, for instance, the king remained dependent on specialists of the *śrauta* ritual because Buddhism did not provide him with alternative royal rituals. Knowledge of Buddhism was probably merely added to the curriculum of the clerks, whose primary schooling included, among other things, Vedic ritual and epic literature.[43] All this might also explain how Buddhist *kāvya* could have

38. The plays, which can with any certainty be ascribed to Kālidāsa's predecessor Bhāsa, namely the *Svapnavāsavadatta* and *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, typically, do not deal with epic themes but with themes belonging to the Udayana cycle (see Tieken 1993 and 1997).

39. Jamison 2006, 146.

40. Tieken 2008.

41. On the role of the "foreign" Buddhist rulers in the early history of Sanskrit literature, see Lévi 1902.

42. See Johnston's introduction to his edition of the Buddhacarita, p. xlvi–l.

43. The situation is comparable to the one in the Aśoka inscriptions. In Rock Edict 8 we are told how the emperor visited the place where the Buddha had received enlightenment, a visit, which subsequently greatly affected the king's administration. In Rock Edict 9, however, heaven (*svarga*) is mentioned as the ultimate goal, which besides to popular Buddhism, also belongs to the world of the *śrauta* sacrifice.

escaped from the ban on pleasurable pastimes such as enjoying literature. We are obviously dealing with a ban which was relevant only in monkish circles and which the court did not feel obliged to obey.

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III

The Developing *Mahākāvya*

However one reads the role of the *mahākāvya* in the early history of Sanskrit poetry, it is clear that by the sixth century we are at the beginning of a new phase. Three major works epitomize the new vision of what the genre should accomplish: Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha*, and Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha*. The first two should really be considered an intertextual set (while Bhaṭṭi's *kāvya* represents a somewhat different direction). Louis Renou, in his great monograph on the style of *kāvya* poetry, recognized in Bhāravi's work a new way of composing poetry distinctive enough to serve as the basis of his description. And Māgha must have come to a similar conclusion, as he clearly had Bhāravi in mind in everything he wrote.

We can spell out certain analytical features of the new *mahākāvya*. These are well-integrated, complete texts typically focused on a martial narrative adapted from an episode of the Sanskrit epic. Although Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha* is based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the other great poems of the period elaborate on individual episodes of the *Mahābhārata*: in addition to the works of Bhāravi and Māgha, we can mention the lost *Hayagrīvavadha* of Bhartṛmeṇṭha, and Nītivarman's *Kīcakavadha*. This selection of martial themes in works presumably by brahman authors is itself perhaps an indication of the political relevance of such works to royal patrons. Within the framework of the episode chosen, each of these compositions reveals some thematic unity and

expressive drive, which come through in the far-reaching elaboration of an already well-known story. As the essays in this section demonstrate, each of these works is also unified through its attention to a specific theological insight.

These complex compositions now feature some of the most powerful figurative and phono-esthetic devices that language can allow. These include extensive passages, and often full sections, devoted to bitextual poetry, which delivers more than one message simultaneously through the use of continuous punning (such as the speech of Śiśupāla's messenger in Māgha's poem, which both praises and condemns Kṛṣṇa); "shape poems," whose syllabic pattern can be mapped on to diagrams representing objects, such as a drum, sword, or wheel (as in Bhāravi's and Māgha's descriptions of battle); twinning devices, in which a string of syllables is repeated with a different meaning (as found in all *mahākāvya*s of this period); expressive alliteration of various types; complex metrical experiments; and so on.

All the essays in this section posit as a working hypothesis a far-reaching isomorphism among these poetic devices and what McCrea calls the "overall narrative and thematic content" of the poem. Note that neither the *alaṅkāra* writers nor modern Sanskrit scholars have ever formulated such a hypothesis or addressed issues such as the pacing of the plot, the role of large-scale repetitions, the interplay between figurative and metrical structures, and a host of other poetic features amply demonstrated in the essays that follow. While some such features have begun to be noticed (an example relevant to this section is Peterson 2003), the *alaṅkāra* works (with rare exceptions such as Kuntaka's fourth chapter) hardly ever notice features extending beyond the individual verse.

In contrast, each of the four essays that follow is a study of such devices viewed with attention to the meaning of the work as a whole. Peter Khoroche draws attention to salient figures of syntax in Bhāravi, such as the omnipresent chiasmus (never defined as a figure in traditional treatises). Lawrence McCrea offers a bold reading of the *Śiśupālavadha* as celebrating the divinity of a silent and inactive God. Gary Tubb examines the long history of *yamaka*, beginning in the early poems and culminating in its mature form in a complex interplay with other figures of meter, sound, and sense in Māgha's poem. Finally, Tom Hunter addresses the role of Bhaṭṭi's atypical *mahākāvya*-cum-grammatical demonstration as seen through its unusual afterlife in the formative period of Old Javanese poetic production in the last three centuries of the first millennium.

5

Pace and Pattern in the *Kirātārjunīya*

Peter Khoroche

A. Bhāravi's Originality

Any account of innovations and turning points in the long history of *kāvya* must give prominence to the figure of Bhāravi. In the one work by which he is known, *Kirātārjunīya* (henceforth *Kir.*), a *mahākāvya* of 1,040 verses divided into eighteen cantos of varying length, he transformed the genre by greatly expanding the treatment of the poem's subject, by intensifying the use of *alaṃkāra* both of sound and sense and, partly as a result of this, by frequently extending the usual meaning of words. The nearest *mahākāvya*s in date before *Kir.* are Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvaṃśa*, written in the late 4th-early 5th century, almost two hundred years earlier.[1] Only scattered verses survive of Meṇṭha's *Hayagrīvavadha* (early fifth century), so that it is Bhāravi who must be credited with the major innovations which first appear in *Kir.* and which were to influence the genre for the next thousand years.

Like most of the writers of ancient India, Bhāravi eludes any attempt to fix him too precisely in time and space. The one sure anchor is the inscription, dated 634/5 AD, at Aihoḷe, near modern Badami in Karnataka. A carefully crafted poem in praise of the Western Cālukya king Pulakeśin II (r. 610–642), it is clearly influenced

1. The pairing of Bhāravi with Māgha, because of the latter's conscious emulation of *Kir.* in *Śiśupālavadha*, illuminates only Māgha. In tone and style and moderation Bhāravi is closer to Kālidāsa than to Māgha and the later writers of *mahākāvya*.

by *Raghuvaṃśa* IV and also echoes some phrases in *Kir.*, though this is perhaps not enough to substantiate the author Ravikīrti's claim to be the rival of both Kālidāsa and Bhāravi. More hazy is the connexion Daṇḍin makes, in his introduction to *Avantisundarī*, between his great-grandfather Dāmodara, Bhāravi, and Viṣṇuvardhana, the younger brother of Pulakeśin. A further scrap of evidence, provided by more than one inscription, is the (lost) commentary on *Kir.* XV written by King Durvinīta Gāṅgeya (r.605–50), Pulakeśin's father-in-law. Since Bhāravi says nothing in *Kir.* about himself, his family, his forebears or his patron, this is all the evidence there is to support the likelihood that he flourished in south India sometime in the late sixth century.

Bhāravi is equally unconcerned to situate himself in any poetic lineage or to claim that he is following a new path. Nor does he make any statement, direct or oblique, about his aim in writing the poem, and though the *ālaṃkārika*s try to fit it into one or other of their theoretical straitjackets, they offer no help in defining its individuality. We have therefore to rely mainly on our own reading of *Kir.* to gauge Bhāravi's achievement and originality.

B. Changes of Pace in Narration and Description

As its title, "Arjuna and the Hunter," proclaims, the poem centres on the relationship between Śiva, disguised as a hunter, and the hero Arjuna. The story of Arjuna's propitiation of Śiva so as to win the magic weapon that will restore his brother, Yudhiṣṭhira, to his throne, Arjuna's trial of strength with Śiva the hunter, and his final success, differs little from its source in the *Kairātaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (henceforth *MBh.*), but the dynamics of its telling are radically altered. The debate between Draupadī and Bhīma on the one hand and Yudhiṣṭhira on the other about whether or not to break their compact with the usurper Duryodhana, takes up ten of the fifteen sections of the *Kairātaparvan* (= *MBh.* III.28–42), while Bhāravi compresses it into the first two of his eighteen cantos. By contrast, the confrontation between Śiva, the *kirāta*, and Arjuna takes up 372 verses (*Kir.*XII.39–XVIII.12), over a third of the whole poem, but only three sections in the *MBh.* (III.40–42).

From this comparison alone one might conclude that Bhāravi's version is more dramatic, less static, than the original. But one has also to take into account *Kir.*IV–XI whose content, though it seems to grow naturally out of the narrative, is very largely of Bhāravi's own invention. As Cappeller (1912: xx) points out, the period between Arjuna's departure for the Himālaya (= *Kir.*III end) and his final bout of *tapas* (= *Kir.*XII beginning) is covered by a mere twenty-three verses in the *MBh.* (= III.38.37–59). Are these intervening eight cantos, then,

just "a huge mass of digressive matter," as S. K. De would have us believe,[2] or could it be that Bhāravi has entirely reconceived the ancient story?

To call all matter digressive that does not directly further the narrative is to misunderstand the very nature of *(mahā)kāvya*. Obviously, if the bare bones of the story had been his main concern, Bhāravi with his outstanding gift for compression (*arthagaurava)* could have told the whole of *Kir.* in one, or at most two, elegant cantos. But it is fairly certain that he was writing for a sophisticated audience, who would have relished the courtly adaptation of the epic tale, with its new refinements of detail, surprising interpolations, and equally refreshing curtailments, much as the readers of Hellenistic poetry in the 3rd century BC would have welcomed its lyric reworking of familiar episodes in the older Greek epic. In so far as all *kāvya*, however serious, has a playful element, its authors' aim is to create something that will entertain—a criterion even more apparent in the work of Bhāravi's follower, Māgha, than in Bhāravi himself, and blatant in Murāri. Bhāravi's primary object is not so much to tell a story as to tell it as richly and entertainingly as possible—to realize its poetic potential as inventively as possible. Holding to this aesthetic, he was the first to treat the traditional poetic topoi (*kāvyasthāna*) not, as previously, in a few verses but as substantial parts of whole cantos. While Kālidāsa (at the beginning of *Kumārasambhava*) describes Himālaya in seventeen verses, Bhāravi devotes all fifty-two verses of *Kir.*V to his description, and after him Māgha, never to be outdone, sixty-eight verses (*Śiśupālavadha* IV.1–68). The topoi of flower-picking, playing in the river, sunset, moonrise, drinking, love-making and dawn successively take up the whole of *Kir.*VIII and IX.

As he shifts from lively discussion and the interplay of character in cantos I–III to description in cantos IV and V, Bhāravi changes pace as well as poetic style. In the first half of canto iv the autumn landscape is seen through Arjuna's eyes (note the insistent use of *paś, nirīkṣ, avekṣ, dṛś*, and *samprekṣ*), while in the second half his *yakṣa* escort provides a running commentary on it.[3] Likewise in canto V, after the poet's initial description of Indrakīla, the *yakṣa* once again takes it upon himself to "interpret" the mountain to Arjuna, the allusions to Śiva in verses 2, 13, 14, 21, 29, 33, 40, 42, 44, and 50 subtly preluding the god's later intervention in the poem. To embellish the description Bhāravi makes selective use of *yamaka* (though without Māgha's mastery) throughout the canto, and

2. S. N. Dasgupta and S. K. De. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta: University Press, 1947, 175.

3. Autumn, the season for military campaigns, is appropriate also for the start of Arjuna's mission. In the description of Mt. Raivataka in *Śiś.*IV, Māgha slavishly follows the same formula: we see the mountain first through Kṛṣṇa's eyes (vv.1–17), then have it described to us by his charioteer Dāruka (vv.19–68).

after the introductory section (a single syntactic unit of fifteen verses like the *himālayavarṇanā* at *Kumārasambhava* I.2–18) rings the changes on sixteen different metres in the remaining thirty-seven verses (see Cappeller 1912: 196). By contrast, in canto VI the pace quickens: description is mixed with the different registers of narrative and speech as Arjuna arrives at Indrakīla and begins his life of asceticism, alarming the resident *guhyakas* who report him to Indra.

At this point Arjuna, who first appeared at canto III.24, disappears: cantos VII–IX are an interlude or intermezzo in which Bhāravi deploys all his considerable skill in describing the bevy of celestial nymphs whom Indra, in time-honoured fashion, sends to distract Arjuna from his *tapas*. But description is too general a term for Bhāravi's method. For example, to enliven the otherwise too placid sequence of flower-picking and bathing images in canto viii, he will introduce a sudden outburst of direct speech:

jahīhi kopaṃ dayito 'nugamyatāṃ purānuśete tava cañcalaṃ manaḥ
iti priyaṃ kāṃcid upaitum icchatīṃ puro 'nuninye nipuṇaḥ sakhījanaḥ

'"Stop sulking and follow your beloved, before your fickle heart regrets it." So saying, a sly friend anticipated one who was wanting to join her lover.'
(VIII.8)

Or he will spice the conventional image with psychological observation:

prayacchatôccaiḥ kusumāni māninī vipakṣa-gotraṃ dayitena lambhitā
na kiṃcid ūce caraṇena kevalaṃ lilekha bāṣpâkula-locanā bhuvam //
priye 'parā yacchati vācam unmukhī nibaddha-dṛṣṭiḥ śithilâkulôccayā
samādadhe nâṃśukam āhitaṃ vṛthā viveda puṣpeṣu na pāṇi-pallavam

"When her beloved, in the act of offering her a bouquet, loudly addressed her with a rival's name, the offended lady said nothing but, with tears in her eyes, scraped the ground with her foot."
"Another fixed her eyes so intently on her beloved as he spoke to her that, when her girdle-knot slipped and came loose, she did not set her skirt straight, nor was she conscious of her hand idly laid upon some flowers."
(VIII.14, 15)

In canto X Arjuna reappears, if only as a passive object: the nymphs try to seduce him but succeed only in falling in love (X.17). Here too the descriptive and narrative are intermixed with speech and with psychological vignettes so as to produce a constantly varying register. The nymphs call upon the seasons to aid them in their task, at which point Bhāravi treats us to a Masque of the Seasons (verses 19–38) as in some baroque opera. To the musical accompaniment

provided by the nymphs' *gandharva* companions each season in turn takes the stage, careful only to show its benign aspect (flowers bloom throughout the masque) in an attempt to sway Arjuna from his austerities. This is *ṛtuvarṇanā* with a difference in that the seasons are not merely described but also made to take an active role in the unfolding story. Unfortunately squabbling breaks out between them (X.36), so that their efforts, no longer united, end in failure. In these twenty verses Bhāravi achieves a symphonic effect with the repetition of letters, syllables and words both within and across the units of verse far beyond anything that had been done before in Sanskrit poetry.

With number X the sequence of broadly descriptive cantos ends. In canto XI Indra, disguised as an elderly sage, visits Arjuna and puts him to the test by suggesting that he is wrongfully practising austerity for worldly ends. Arjuna's spirited defence impresses Indra enough to make him drop his disguise and predict Arjuna's eventual success. With the shift from description to dialogue pace and style alter again: after the alternating twelve- and thirteen-syllable *puṣpitāgrā* verses of canto X the flow of the poem speeds up with the eight-syllable *anuṣṭubh* as the carrying metre of canto XI.

The final seven cantos of *Kir.* (XII–XVIII) hugely expand the few parallel verses in the *MBh.* (III.40–42) and the dynamic is a steady *crescendo ed accelerando*, building up to a thrilling climax at XVIII.12 when Arjuna catches the *kirāta* by his feet as he leaps up in the air. The wrestler's hold is instantly reinterpreted as the supplication of a devotee: the *kirāta* reveals his true identity, embraces Arjuna, and fully restores him. The dénouement as presented by Bhāravi is incomparably more exciting than in the *MBh.* Nor are the preceding cantos just one long slogging match between the two combatants. Bhāravi knows how to diversify and so sustain interest, most famously in canto xv where Skanda harangues Śiva's fleeing troops, and where patterned verse *(citrakāvya)* first appears in Sanskrit poetry. A verse such as the *ekākṣarapāda*:

sa sāsiḥ sāsusūḥ sāso yeyāyeyāyayāyayaḥ
lalau līlāṃ lalo 'lolaḥ śaśīśaśiśuśīḥ śaśan (XV.5)

would, one imagines, first have baffled its hearers then, once elucidated, amused them. Though entirely in the spirit of *kāvya*, such verbal acrobatics involve the poet in drastic stretches of meaning and other licences which surely diminish his achievement: in the double-palindrome verse 25, for instance, almost every word is rare or used in a special sense (including *vā*).

Once the climax of the poem is reached, the pace changes again and Bhāravi closes with a bravura display of metrical variation (fifteen meters within thirty-six verses). Arjuna sings a *śivastotra* (XVIII.21–43), then Śiva and the Dikpālas bestow magic weapons that will ensure the Pāṇḍavas' ultimate victory over the Kauravas (XVIII.44–47). Here, as in certain verses in cantos I–III and in

XI.45–58, Bhāravi manages, by deft allusion, to make implicit the entire story of the *MBh.*[4] In the final verse Arjuna, his mission accomplished and with Śiva's blessing, returns without more ado to Yudhiṣṭhira in the Dvaita Forest. The poem concludes with dramatic suddenness, losing none of its momentum, just as at its beginning Bhāravi plunges the reader without preamble *in medias res.*

C. Characteristics of Bhāravi's Style

If, on first looking into *Kir.*, the present-day reader feels baffled, he may draw comfort from a verse in Mallinātha's introduction to his *Ghaṇṭāpatha* commentary to the poem:

nārikela-phala-saṃmitaṃ vaco bhāraveḥ sapadi tad vibhajyate
svādayantu rasa-garbha-nirbharaṃ sāram asya rasikā yathêpsitam

"A verse of Bhāravi is like a coconut: the moment it is split open connoisseurs can savour its delicious contents at pleasure."

Whatever may have constituted the hard shell of Bhāravi's verse for a fifteenth-century scholar steeped in Sanskrit, for us now three things combine to delay comprehension: the order, the meaning and the concision of the words.

The position of a word in a verse of *Kir.* may be determined by sound (consonance, assonance, alliteration, repetition of syllables, paronomasia) or by semantic patterning (chiasmus, asyndeton, antithesis, emphasis, suspense), as well as by the constraints of meter.[5] But in many verses the reason for the word order is not so obvious, and it needs to be unscrambled. For example, XI.50, where the disrupted word order may mirror the violent situation:[6]

upādhatta sapatneṣu kṛṣṇāyā guru-saṃnidhau
bhāvam ānayane satyāḥ satyaṃkāram ivântakaḥ

"When faithful Draupadī was dragged around in the presence of her elders, Death made a resolution about our enemies that was as good as a promise."

4. As remarked by Kuntaka, *Vakroktijīvita*, ed. S. K. De, 3rd. ed., Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961, pp. 239ff. See A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 3, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977, §1529.

5. See Renou 1959: §23, 24. On word repetition in adjacent stanzas, or within three or four stanzas, as an integrating device see Walther Schubring, *ZDMG* 105 (1955), 331–37.

6. So Aharon Fattal, "Structural Studies in Bhāravi and Māgha", *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 5 (1987), 56, but this would not explain the scrambled word order of for example, IX.19. The dearth and uncertainty of the conclusions drawn from this study of word pattern make plain the inadequacy of mere statistics to probe Bhāravi's daedal art.

Similarly VII.11, where the position of *sambhinnair* and *payobhiḥ* reflects the displacement of water:

> *sambhinnair ibha-turagâvagāhanena prâpyôrvīr anupadavīṃ vimāna-paṅktīḥ*
> *tatpūrvaṃ pratividadhe surâpagāyā vaprânta-skhalita-vivartanaṃ payobhiḥ*
> "The waters of the celestial river, shattered by the plunging of elephants and horses, on reaching the vast array of oncoming chariots, flowed back as though impeded by banks for the first time."

As for the meaning of words, Bhāravi draws on the whole spectrum of vocabulary from the Vedas onwards. Not infrequently he uses a rare word (for example, I.38 *adabhra* to clash with juxtaposed *darbha*), coins a word (for example, II.6 *nirūḍhi* "mastery," III.43 *avamarṣa* "forgetting," XI.56 *rahovṛtta* "private thoughts") or gives an unfamiliar twist to a familiar word (for example, II.10 *anupālayati* "overlook"< "oversee," with which compare XV.19 *nigup-;* V.25 *kamala* "water" < "lotus"). This creative use of language has been documented by Renou (1959) and does not need further notice here.[7] Questionable, however, is the notion of semantic slippage (*décalage sémantique)*, which Renou offers with due hesitation (1959: 52). By this he seeks to explain an apparent instability in the meaning of some words (for example, *abhimāna* "self-respect" at II.13 & 19 but "arrogance" at II.48) as due to a deliberate strategy on the poet's part to create a sense of uncertainty in the listener/reader. To be sure, Bhāravi's poetic statements can often have a complex resonance, but they are never vague or indeterminate. Otherwise how could the all-important point *(vicchitti)* make its impact? Often one or two words act as a key to unlock the meaning of a verse. Then what had seemed impenetrable suddenly becomes clear: the tap of a finger-nail is enough to split a coconut, if one knows where to tap.

The third obstacle to immediate comprehension is also, according to traditional lore, Bhāravi's outstanding gift: compression (*arthagauravam* lit. "weight of meaning," glossed at II.27 by *arthabhūyastvam*, "condensed richness of meaning").[8] Every word in a Bhāravi verse contributes its full share towards the expression of his idea. There is no padding. Particles, prepositions, pronouns and correlatives—"weak" words—are kept to a minimum, so that there are no more than ten to twelve lexical items per line (and in *anuṣṭubh* as little as five or six).

7. See however Peter Khoroche, "Bhāravi's Way with Words," *JOR Madras*, LXXXI–LXXXII, 2009–10, 10–16.

8. The various qualities of style, including *arthagaurava*, praised at I.3 and II.26, 27 all apply specifically to the rhetoric of debate, which hardly licences a personal or programmatic interpretation of them as the qualities Bhāravi aspires to in his poetry. Similarly at XI.38–40 Arjuna's compliments to Indra on his powers of persuasion are the conventional politeness of the debater who is about to demolish his opponent's arguments.

In V.28, for instance, a series of comparisons is made without any comparative particles:

śrīmal-latā bhavanam oṣadhayaḥ pradīpāḥ śayyā navāni
haricandanapallavāni
asmin rati-śrama-nudaś ca saroja-vātāḥ smartuṃ diśanti na divaḥ
sura-sundarībhyaḥ

"Here the luxuriant creepers, which are like a house, the luminous herbs like lamps, the shoots of sandalwood like beds, and the lotus-scented breezes that allay weariness after passion—all teach the celestial nymphs to forget heaven."

Bhāravi's ideal of compact expression is reflected in his fondness for antithesis and apposition, often in the form of chiasmus. For example I.7, where the apposition of *bhavataḥ... vanâdhivāsinaḥ* and *nṛpâsana-stho...suyodhanaḥ* is placed in chiasmus:

viśaṅkamāno bhavataḥ parābhavaṃ nṛpâsana-stho 'pi vanâdhivāsinaḥ
durodara-cchadma-jitāṃ samīhate nayena jetuṃ jagatīṃ suyodhanaḥ

"Suyodhana may occupy the throne but he is afraid your highness, though exiled in the forest, may overthrow him. He wants to win over by conciliation the people he has already won deceitfully by dice."

Or I.42, where the construction is again chiasmic—abandon quietism > conquer enemies/shake off enemies > succeed by quietism:

vihāya śāntiṃ nṛpa dhāma tat punaḥ prasīda saṃdhehi vadhāya vidviṣām
vrajanti śatrūn avadhūya niḥspṛhāḥ śamena siddhiṃ munayo na bhūbhṛtaḥ

"O king, have done with your acquiescence and be pleased to assume once more that fighting spirit of yours, so as to slay your enemies. Passionless ascetics may shake off their foes (that is their baser instincts) by peaceful means and so succeed, but not kings."

This almost epigrammatic quality is seen also in Bhāravi's use of *arthāntaranyāsa* (corroboration) to clinch a verse. After *upamā* and *utprekṣā* it is the figure he favours most and its frequency in cantos I and II and in the latter half of IX gives these parts of the poem a gnomic character.

It is something of a paradox that Bhāravi's verbal economy should be at the service of a poetic genre typified by hypercharacterization and descriptive overkill, and that it was he who first expanded the descriptive element in *mahākāvya* so drastically. But it is the combination of these two opposites that gives his poem its richness and vitality. One means of preventing the exuberance of

description becoming static was to pack the verse with dynamic images. For example, in V.15:

vitata-śīkara-rāśibhir ucchritair upala-rodha-vivartibhir ambubhiḥ
dadhatam unnata-sānu-samuddhatāṃ dhṛta-sita-vyajanām iva jāhnavīm
"High upon its summit it bears the Ganges, which seems to be holding a white fan as its waters are tossed up and swirl round the rocks that block them, showering masses of spray."

Or V.46 with the insistent *javād...sahasā...muhur*:

saktiṃ javād apanayaty anile latānāṃ vairocanair dvi-guṇitāḥ sahasā mayūkhaiḥ
rodho-bhuvāṃ muhur amutra hiraṇmayīnāṃ bhāsas taḍid-vilasitāni viḍambayanti

"When the wind swiftly parts the tangle of creepers, the gleams on its (= Himālaya's) gold-flecked slopes, suddenly redoubled by the rays of the sun, momentarily mimic lightning flashes."[9]

Or VI.5:

avarugṇa-tuṅga-suradāru-tarau nicaye puraḥ surasarit-payasām
sa dadarśa vetasa-vana-caritāṃ praṇatiṃ balīyasi samṛddhikarīm

"He saw before him the reed-beds do beneficent obeisance to the mighty mass of the Ganges' water, which had torn down lofty deodars."

Here the redundant *-tarau* contributes to the sound-pattern of *pāda*s ab (note also the wide separation of *nicaye* and *balīyasi*). Or VII.6:

rājadbhiḥ pathi marutām abhinna-rūpair ulkârciḥ-sphuṭa-gatibhir dhvajâṃśukānām
tejobhiḥ kanaka-nikāṣa-rāji-gaurair āyāmaḥ kriyata iva sma sātirekaḥ

"The length of their banners seemed to be made even longer by the bright, unbroken radiance, yellow as a streak of gold filings, of the clear paths of meteors in the sky."

On a larger scale, successive images, often dramatically contrasted, break the bounds of individual verses to form larger compositional units. Peterson (2003:94 ff.) draws attention to Bhāravi's treatment of themes and imagery in the descriptive cantos VII and VIII by means of alternation and interweaving

9. Contra *pw, rodhobhū* = *rodhas* "mountainside", as at XVI.55, just as *darībhū* = *darī* in V.10—a typical case of the verbal redundancy characteristic of *(mahā)kāvya*. Other exx., Renou 1959, §27.

instead of linear progression, and compares (pp. 105–6) the constantly changing pattern of the same elements to the permutations of the defining notes of a *rāga*. These cantos describe the journey of the heavenly nymphs and musicians to Indrakīla, the play of their elephants in the Ganges, their flower-picking in the forest and then their own diversions in the waters of the river. The tables below list the main constituents of each canto and the verses in which they occur.

Canto VII

apsaras	1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 28, 29, 40
chariots	1, 4, 6, 11, 12, 19, 22, 25
elephants	1, 8, 11, 13, 20, 24, 30, 31–39
river	9, 10, 11, 18, 25, 26, 32, 35, 36
clouds	8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 39
ichor	8, 24, 31–35, 37, 38
horses	4, 11, 19, 21
army	9, 17, 25, 27, 36, 40
gandharvas	1, 7, 26, 27

Canto VIII

apsaras	1ff.
gandharvas	2, 13–16, 18, 19, 26, 30, 32, 37, 40, 46, 48–51, 53, 54
bees	5, 6, 7, 11, 35, 47
river	27ff.
lotuses	24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 36, 42, 44, 47, 56
blossom	4, 5, 6, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21

The narrow range of imagery in Sanskrit poetry is often remarked upon, usually with implied criticism. But the very frequency of the recurring images in these cantos suggests, rather than a hopeless dearth of imagination, a deliberate choice on Bhāravi's part to limit his material so as to highlight his virtuosic handling of it. As he presents the images of chariots, elephants, clouds, and so on, in ever changing combinations, so that each sheds light on the other in a new relationship, it is as though he were turning a kaleidoscope: the wonder of it lies not only in the new patterns formed at each turn but that so many patterns can be created from so few colours. This patterning of a severely restricted range of images has its counterpart in the patterning of a severely restricted range of syllables in *citrakāvya*. Both are aspects of the virtuosity intrinsic to *kāvya*.

To sum up so far, there is ample evidence of Bhāravi's conscious care to relate parts to the whole by varying the pace and register from one canto to another; by creating within each canto patterns or groupings of verse; by charging individual

verses with a compacted energy or else an aphoristic balance or tension; and by his choice of vocabulary, so that phonemes and lexemes, in assonance or dissonance, both within the verse units and echoing across them in a pervasive musicality, create a coordinated whole. The descriptive passages, however long, are not disproportionate, so that the reader is never in danger of losing track of the narrative.

D. The Subject of the Poem

In the absence of any statement by Bhāravi himself, what can we infer about his intentions in writing *Kir.*? What is his reshaping of the story supposed to highlight? What, in short, is the poem about?

Daṇḍin, in the introduction to *Avantisundarī* already mentioned, describes Bhāravi as a *mahāśaiva.* Maybe the poet's Śaiva affiliation was common knowledge, otherwise Daṇḍin could easily have deduced it from *Kir.*, which is based on one of the few episodes in the *MBh.* where Śiva is a central figure and which reflects the poet's devotion, especially in cantos V, XII, 19–24, and XVIII. Even so, in the last third of the poem, where Śiva finally appears, Bhāravi makes no departure from the *MBh.* narrative, such as might betray a personal slant, except in one small detail. At *MBh.* III.40.50 Śiva finally overcomes Arjuna in combat and reduces him to an unconscious pulp of flesh before reviving him, praising him and promising him the Pāśupata missile (III.41.10–15), whereas in *Kir.* Śiva does not defeat Arjuna. Instead, Arjuna is about to throw Śiva to the ground when the god reveals himself and embraces him (XVIII.13)[10]—an incomparably more exciting and more moving resolution of the agon. Nor is the brief *śivastotra* spoken by Arjuna in XVIII.21–43 an invention of Bhāravi's. It has its source in the *MBh.*, though the five verses of praise that belong between III.40.57a and 57b in the critical edition are relegated to footnote 174, unaccountably since they occur in all the Northern and some of the Southern manuscripts. Overall, Śiva as antagonist is less prominent in the story than Arjuna its protagonist. Yet Arjuna remains a type not an individual, an instrument not an independent agent (XI.77). He carries out his mission, but there is nothing to suggest that he has been changed by it.

The theme of *Kir.* is the Pāṇḍavas' reclamation of *śrī*, royal sovereignty, from the Kauravas. In the course of the narrative there are two debates about the competing claims of quietism and forceful action. In the first, since there is no dispute about the necessity for action, the point at issue is whether it should be immediate or delayed. This political discussion fills cantos I and II and is resolved

10. The embrace is, however, crushing: *niṣpipeṣa parirabhya vakṣasā.* Perhaps *niṣpipeṣa* echoes *(arjunaḥ) niṣpīḍitair gātraiḥ pindīkṛta ivābabhau* in the parallel passage, *MBh.*III.40.50.

at the close of canto III when Arjuna dons his armour and sets forth on his mission. The second discussion is on a point of religious ethics, when Indra puts Arjuna to the test by claiming that his ascetic practices are incompatible with the warrior ethic. Arjuna easily demonstrates that this is a false opposition, since *tapas* is a practical means, available to anyone, for good purposes or bad, of acquiring power and, most importantly, of gaining the respectful attention of the gods. It is not necessarily or exclusively directed towards *mukti*, as Indra would pretend. Like the earlier debate, this one leads directly to further action, when Arjuna begins to do battle with Śiva and his army in canto XIV. The rightness of Arjuna having followed the *kṣātradharma* is finally confirmed by Śiva himself at XVIII.14:

> *tapasā tathā na mudam asya yayau bhagavān yathā vipula-sattvatayā*
> *guṇa-saṃhateḥ samatirikta-maho nijam eva sattvam upakāri satām*
>
> "The Holy One was not so much delighted with his ascetic practice as with the fact of his boundless fortitude. Far greater in power than any number of qualities he may acquire, a good man's native fortitude is his best support."[11]

The verse finally resolves VI.22, where Arjuna is declared to possess two kinds of splendour (*mahas*): a warrior's prowess (*jaya*), which is innate (*sahaja*), and an ascetic's calm (*śama*), which is acquired (*itara*). The oppositions *jaya/śama* and *kṣātradharma/tapas* are not prominent in the *Kairātaparvan* but Bhāravi returns to them at several points in the poem. Peterson (2003:137) sees significance in this defence of *kṣātradharma* by "a Śaiva brahman author writing in a cultural milieu dominated by *śramaṇa* [specifically Jaina] groups." It is as well, though, to remember that *Kir.* is not primarily a religious hymn, still less a political tract, but a work of art in which apparent contradiction and mysterious ambivalence can be highlighted for aesthetic ends.

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11. I am aware that Mallinātha, in his commentary, reads *samatiriktam aho* but would suggest that the recollection here of the *sahajaṃ mahas* at VI, 22 gives greater point to the verse.

6

The Conquest of Cool

Theology and Aesthetics in Māgha's Śiśupālavadha

Lawrence McCrea

The seventh century Sanskrit poet Māgha has generally been regarded within the Indian tradition as one of the greatest literary artists of pre-modern South Asia, and his poem enshrined as one of the five canonical *mahākāvyas*—"great poems" or "court epics." Nevertheless his work, the *Śiśupālavadha* ("The Slaying of Śiśupāla"), like so many other poems highly esteemed within the tradition, has often been viewed by modern critics in India and the west as of somewhat dubious merit. Māgha's gift for description, his technical skill in the use of meters, and of phonetic and semantic figures, have generally been acknowledged even by his more severe critics, but these acknowledgements more often than not are accompanied by a gentle or not-so-gentle disparagement of the poet, especially for his indulgence in extensive, digressive description and figurative excess, and his corresponding neglect of plot.[1] Thus, his acknowledged talents are

1. See, for example, Keith 1923, 55: "The theme is obviously inadequate to support an epic... Māgha's reputation later doubtless rests in some degree on the vitiation of taste..." "But he had undoubtedly no mean talent." De 1957, 191–92: "In respect of rhetorical skill and exuberance of fancy, Māgha is not unsuccessful, and may have even surpassed Bhāravi; but the remark does not apply in respect of real poetic quality...," "It is impossible to like or admire Māgha heartily, and yet there are qualities which draw our reluctant liking and admiration." Kunhan Raja 1962, 145: "There is nothing that can be called a story. This small episode is only an occasion for the poet to compose a Grand Epic." Warder 1972, 134: "... Māgha's poem taken as a whole, and even in detail, lacks the proper epic movement, the energy and seriousness of the great

ironically seen to be the real source of the problem in Māgha's work—he is so absorbed in the crafting of individual gems of description and elaborate poetic figuration that he pays little or no heed to the development of story or character. With remarkable consistency, modern critics have found in *Śiśupālavadha* a radical disproportion between ends and means, contrasting the "slenderness" of its theme with the ponderous weight, digressive character, and excessive complexity of the verses in which it is elaborated.

The underlying, and generally unstated, presupposition of this critique is that the proper object of an "epic" such as the *Śiśupālavadha* is to present a dramatic, emotionally compelling narrative. Description and figuration may usefully be employed to ornament and add color to this story, but taken to excess will obstruct rather than enhance the development of the narrative, and hence diminish the overall aesthetic effectiveness of the poem. What I would like to suggest here is that, at least with regard to the *Śiśupālavadha*, this presupposition is fundamentally misguided: I would argue that the specific poetic techniques of description and figuration Māgha employs so extensively in this poem *do* serve to undermine any sense of dramatic tension in the work, but that, far from being an unintended and crippling side effect and the result of carelessness, this effect is both deliberate and aesthetically fruitful. I believe it can be shown that there is in fact a deep and fundamental harmony between the overall narrative and thematic content of Māgha's poem and the specific literary techniques he deploys in constructing the episodes and the individual verses that make up the poem—that the poem works, at both the micro- and the macro-level, to render its narrative and its central character as *undramatic* as possible.

In considering the overall design and objectives of the *Śiśupālavadha*, one must first take account of the fact that its hero, Kṛṣṇa—the character who stands at the center of the plot and is the primary object for description as well—is not a man, but a god. Indeed, he is *the* god, the supreme lord of the universe. He has taken birth as a human "in order to teach the world" (1.1), as Māgha puts it, but he remains conscious of his own divinity. While divine or semi-divine heroes are of course not uncommon in Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s, Māgha's treatment of Kṛṣṇa's divinity departs in key respects from the portrayal of divine characters in

poems of the genre." Warder 1972, 143: "Instead of surpassing Bhāravi, as he evidently meant to do, he thus abandoned the 'weight of meaning' as well as the compact and powerful expressiveness of the earlier poet... Then again Māgha seems to be following a pattern of themes... rather than working out the implications of a story." Lienhard 1984, 189: Māgha "abandons the story entirely in Sargas IV to XI in favor of pure description..." "The narrative in Māgha's poem is more heavily obscured by description and detailed pictures than it is in Bhāravi's."

earlier *mahākāvyas*.[2] Specifically, Māgha's Kṛṣṇa is both unambiguously the protagonist of his work (unlike the Śiva of *Kumārasambhava*, who figures primarily as the object of Pārvatī's romantic pursuit, and is not himself the pursuer), and fully aware of his own divinity (unlike the Rāma of *Raghuvaṃśa* or *Jānakīharaṇa*). So, the central character of Māgha's poem is, in effect, omnipotent, and knows it. And this, of course, has a significant impact on the portrayal of his character and the development of the narrative. As a fully and self-consciously divine being, Kṛṣṇa can be subject to no real want or need that would require him to act. Yet as a human being and, more to the point, the hero of a literary work, he must undertake some course of action, the pursuit of which can sustain the narrative (however "slender" that narrative may be). The puzzle of how and why God acts in the world is, of course, an old one, familiar from many contexts, yet the specifics of its manifestation here merit close observation. I think it can be clearly shown that it forms the central problematic of Māgha's great poem, one which guides and shapes both the overall structures of its plot and characterization and the specific literary devices employed in its construction.

A. The Poetics of Inaction

The issue of Kṛṣṇa's absolute divinity, and its implications for the action of the poem and his attitude toward it, are hinted at in the opening verse of the poem itself:

> The Lord of Prosperity, Hari, the abode of the world, dwelling in the prosperous house of Vasudeva in order to teach the world, saw the sage, born from the body of the Brahma, descending from the sky.[3]

The poem begins with a paradox of sorts: Kṛṣṇa[4] is both the "abode of the world," in whom and through whom everything subsists, and a human being,

2. At least those that are extant. The lost *Hayagrīvavadha* of Bhartṛmeṇṭha (5th century?) would have had such a self-consciously divine hero (Viṣṇu). Māgha certainly knew Bhartṛmeṇṭha's work: the penultimate verse of the *Śiśupālavadha* (20.78) is a clear imitation of a famous verse from the *Hayagrīvavadha* (cited in *Dhvanyāloka*, p. 225).

3. *śriyaḥ patiḥ śrīmati śāsituṃ jagaj jagan-nivāso vasudeva-sadmani /*
vasan dadarśâvatarantam ambarād dhiraṇya-garbhâṅga-bhuvaṃ muniṃ hariḥ // 1.1
All quotations from *Śiśupālavadha* are from the Kashi Sanskrit Series edition (Benares, 1929). Translations are my own. For further thoughts and a slightly different perspective on the opening chapter of the *Śiśupālavadha*, see Trynkowska 2004.

4. Here called Hari, properly a name of the god Viṣṇu, not the human avatar Kṛṣṇa. The distinction between the two is systematically effaced, through both nomenclature and numerous figurative devices, as we will see later.

born into a particular household, one actor among others in the world. The disparity between these two roles will be a major theme throughout the poem, and it casts an important light on the ensuing conversation between Kṛṣṇa and the sage Nārada who is descending to speak to him. Nārada, it turns out, has come with a message from Indra, the king of the gods: he tells Kṛṣṇa that his cousin Śiśupāla, the king of Cedi (already a political and personal enemy of Kṛṣṇa), is in fact a demonic being who threatens the world, and requests that Kṛṣṇa destroy him for the good of all. It is this conversation that sets up the central conflict of the poem and provides the overarching structure for its plot—Kṛṣṇa agrees to kill Śiśupāla and (through a curiously indirect series of events) ends by doing so in the final chapter of the poem. Yet Māgha presents this seemingly crucial encounter in a manner which appears deliberately designed to deflate any sense of drama or emotional intensity that might arise from it. In the few verses of welcome he speaks to Nārada upon his arrival, Kṛṣṇa downplays the significance of the actual content of Nārada's message, stressing that it is the mere honor of the sage's presence that truly matters to him:

> Merely by the sight of you, which drives away evil, I am satisfied,
> O sage. Nevertheless, I wish to hear your worthy speech. Indeed,
> whoever has enough of what is good?[5]

This elevation of the messenger at the expense of the message may seem like just so much politeness on Kṛṣṇa's part, but it is mirrored in Nārada's own introductory remarks:

> Although you yourself, leaving aside all toil, have already begun, in
> due order, to crush the enemies of the world, nevertheless my mind,
> greedy for conversation with you, makes me talkative.[6]

Like Kṛṣṇa before him, Nārada here stresses the superfluity of his own message. Kṛṣṇa need not be told to destroy Śiśupāla, or any other world-threatening force—this he will do on his own regardless, and (significantly, as I will argue) he will do so without effort—"leaving aside all toil" (*ujjhita-śrama*). The actual content of his speech—the message from Indra—is, he suggests, merely a pretext for initiating a conversation with Kṛṣṇa. So, both Kṛṣṇa and Nārada go out of their way to emphasize the spiritual and social—one might almost say, the ritual—value of their meeting, in contradistinction to its ostensible purpose. Despite the alleged threat to the world posed by Śiśupāla, Indra's plea for his destruction is treated as of at best secondary importance.

5. *vilokanenâiva tavâmunā mune kṛtaḥ kṛtârtho 'smi nibṛṃhitāṃhasā /*
tathâpi śuśrūṣur ahaṃ garīyasīr giro 'tha vā śreyasi kena tṛpyate // 1.29
6. *pravṛtta eva svayam ujjhita-śramaḥ krameṇa peṣṭuṃ bhuvana-dviṣām asi /*
tathâpi vācālatayā yunakti māṃ mithas tvad-ābhāṣaṇa-lolupaṃ manaḥ // 1.40

Again, one might be inclined at first glance to dismiss Kṛṣṇa and Nārada's remarks as just a bit of mutual flattery before getting down to the serious business of Indra's message and the threat posed by Śiśupāla. But there are elements in Nārada's speech (comprising the rest of the first chapter), which further serve subtly to undermine rather than to enhance the dramatic impact of the passage. The remainder of this speech consists of a long description of Śiśupāla's acts of aggression, and of the great power he has acquired, not only in his current life, but in two prior incarnations. This looks like the standard device of building up the power of the hero's antagonist in order to accentuate the hero's own heroism in finally defeating his foe,[7] but introducing the element of reincarnation here changes the picture considerably in a way that actually serves to subvert the end to which this device is typically thought to serve. Śiśupāla, it turns out, is the reincarnation of the *asura* Hiraṇyakaśipu, and also of Rāvaṇa (both, of course, killed by Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu in his own previous avatars). The bulk of the Nārada's speech (1.42–68) is given over to the description of the powers Śiśupāla amassed in these two prior births. Yet these are powers Kṛṣṇa has "already" overcome, as Nārada is quick to point out:

> He [Hiraṇyakaśipu] was torn apart in the chest with claws curved from the touch of the breasts of naive young women, by you, O Man-Lion, bearing a vast leonine body and piercing the clouds with your mane.[8]
>
> Then, desiring to satisfy an itch born from pride by battle with the gods, he again was born as a demon, named Rāvaṇa, terribly fearsome and breaking the protection of heaven.[9]

This "itch" for battle, and the prideful but self-destructive impulsiveness it connotes, are a leitmotif in the characterization of Śiśupāla throughout the poem, and it surfaces again just a bit further on, when Rāvaṇa's own death is described:

> He [Rāvaṇa] who did not release Sītā, although he recognized [you], the Lord, the unborn one, not human, but born in the family of Man, as his own future death—for proud ones always have pride as their only wealth.[10]

7. Discussed in Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* 1.21–22. Cf. also *Kirātārjunīya* 1.1–25; the latter poem opens with a spy's description of Duryodhana's successful and popular rule, setting the stage for the Pāṇḍavas' plans to overcome him, and the consequent quest of Arjuna for divine weapons which forms the main action of the poem.

8. *saṭā-cchaṭâbhinna-ghanena bibhratā nṛsiṃha saiṃhīm atanuṃ tanuṃ tvayā /*
sa mugdha-kāntā-stana-saṅga-bhaṅgurair urovidāraṃ praticaskare nakhaiḥ // 1.47

9. *vinodam icchann atha darpa-janmano raṇena kaṇḍvās tridaśaiḥ samaṃ punaḥ /*
sa rāvaṇo nāma nikāma-bhīṣaṇaṃ babhūva rakṣaḥ kṣata-rakṣaṇaṃ divaḥ // 1.48

10. *amānavaṃ jātam ajaṃ kule manoḥ prabhāvinaṃ bhāvinam antam ātmanaḥ /*
mumoca jānann api jānakīṃ na yaḥ sadâbhimānâika-dhanā hi māninaḥ // 1.67

> Remember this—You, becoming the son of Daśaratha, slew that one, who took your beloved from the forest, at the gates of Laṅkā, after crossing the ocean, impure with its agitated, turbulent water.[11]

The killing Kṛṣṇa is now asked to perform, then, not a singular event, but a recurrent one: he has killed this being repeatedly before and, one may be sure, will do so again. The regularity, and therefore the predictability, of what is to be the climactic event of the poem—Kṛṣṇa's killing of Śiśupāla—and the characters' own awareness of this predictability, serve precisely to rule out any sense of suspense or dramatic tension that might otherwise attach to this event. The central plot of the poem acquires thereby a kind of artificial, scripted quality—it is the playing out of a known scenario to a known conclusion. And the description of the enemy's current incarnation as Śiśupāla, immediately following the verse quoted above, explicitly touches on this theme:

> Now, intent on deceit, having taken on another birth, like an actor taking on a role, concealing himself with the name "Śiśupāla," he is thought by others not to be him, although it is him.[12]

The theatrical metaphor serves again to highlight the recurrent character of his conflict with Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, and, concomitantly, the transitory and ephemeral nature of this particular instantiation of the conflict.

Yet the image of the actor taking on a role should not be taken to connote mutability. His names and identities may change—Hiraṇyakaśipu, Rāvaṇa, Śiśupāla—but his fundamental nature remains constant. He is "thought not to be him, although it is him." The same point is made more explicitly a few verses on:

> Due to pride in his power, desirous of conquest, he oppresses the world now as he did before—Like a good wife, a determined nature follows a man even into other lives.[13]

Character is constant. Śiśupāla will act in this life as he has in others, and so, presumably, will Kṛṣṇa—the statement is about the continuity of character is general. So the necessity of Kṛṣṇa's conflict with Śiśupāla is reaffirmed, and the certainty of Kṛṣṇa's victory is again hinted at.

11. *smaraty ado dāśarathir bhavan bhavān amuṃ vanantād vanitâpahāriṇam / payodhim āviddha-calaj-jalâvilaṃ vilaṅghya laṅkāṃ nikaṣā haniṣyati //* 1.68
12. *athôpapattiṃ chalanā-paro 'parāṃ avāpya śailūṣa ivaiṣa bhūmikām / tirohitâtmā śiśupāla-saṃjñayā pratīyate saṃprati so 'py asaḥ paraiḥ //* 1.69
13. *balâvalepād adhunâpi pūrvavad prabādhyate tena jagaj jigīṣuṇā / satīva yoṣit prakṛtiḥ suniścitā pumāṃsam anveti bhavântareṣv api //* 1.72

If it were not already driven home clearly enough, the certainty of Kṛṣṇa's victory is directly asserted in the final verse of the first chapter, when Kṛṣṇa, with characteristic terseness, agrees to destroy Śiśupāla:

> As the divine sage, bearing the splendor of the moon, flew up to heaven after uttering his speech, Kṛṣṇa replied "Yes." And, as he set his mind on battle, a comet declaring certain destruction for his enemies found a place on his face, as if it were the sky—a comet in the guise of a raised eyebrow.[14]

The poem's second chapter introduces an interesting complication in the fairly simple course of action envisioned in the first—one whose resolution both reflects and further develops the themes set forth in the first. Kṛṣṇa has just committed himself to kill Śiśupāla, yet, we now learn, he has also been invited to intend the royal *rājasūya* sacrifice of his friend and ally Yudhiṣṭhira. This presents a dilemma—should Kṛṣṇa set out to war against Śiśupāla, as he has promised, or attend the sacrifice instead? The chapter takes the form of a debate between Kṛṣṇa, his brother Balarāma, and his uncle and advisor Uddhava as to which of these two courses of action Kṛṣṇa should now follow. Apart from a very brief introductory speech of Kṛṣṇa's (2.8–12), this debate takes the form of two long speeches, the first by Balarāma, who urges an immediate attack on Śiśupāla, and the second by Uddhava, who recommends that Śiśupāla be left alone for the time being and that Kṛṣṇa attend the sacrifice. Both support their arguments with abundant reference to the principles of statecraft, the specifics of which need not divert us here. What is noteworthy for our purposes is the way the debate is finally resolved. Uddhava ends by arguing that there is no need for Kṛṣṇa to launch an attack—left to his own devices, Śiśupāla will no doubt bring about his own destruction, alienating his allies and provoking a war he cannot win. In the last verse of his speech, the one which apparently clinches the argument in his favor, Uddhava introduces a metaphor which sets the tone for much of what will follow in the remainder of the poem:

> Let all your enemies, puffed up by the fault of inborn rashness, with the support of their allies (/wings)[15] weak and faltering, become moths in the flame of your matchless heroism.[16]

14. *om ity uktavato 'tha śārṅgina iti vyāhṛtya vācaṃ nabhas*
tasminn utpatite puraḥ sura-munāv indoḥ śriyaṃ bibhrati /
śatrūṇāṃ nitarāṃ vināśa-piśunaḥ kartur matiṃ saṃyati
vyomnīva bhru-kuṭi-cchalena vadane ketuś cakārâspadam // 1.75

15. A pun on the word *pakṣa*, which means both "wing" (in connection with the moth) and "ally" (in connection with the enemies).

16. *sahaja-cāpala-doṣa-samuddhataś calita-durbala-pakṣa-parigrahaḥ /*
tava durāsada-vīrya-vibhāvasau śalabhatāṃ labhatām asuhṛd-gaṇaḥ // 2.117

The image of the moth and the flame sets out with beautiful succinctness the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla, and the way in which their conflict will ultimately resolve itself. It also quite elegantly finesses the problem of divine action discussed above. Kṛṣṇa will bring about the destruction of Śiśupāla, not by "doing" anything to pursue this objective, but simply by being who he is. He need only wait: Śiśupāla's nature will in the end lead him to bring about his own destruction. Kṛṣṇa will be the cause, but not the agent, of his destruction, just as the flame is for the moth. Exactly as Nārada said earlier, Kṛṣṇa will destroy this "enemy of the world," but without effort—"leaving aside all toil."

B. The Ideal of Emotional Restraint

This absence of effort, embodied in the moth-flame analogy, is basic to Kṛṣṇa's character as Māgha presents it. His Kṛṣṇa is a model of restraint, physical as well as emotional. Given his central and dominating presence in the *Śiśupālavadha*, it is extraordinary how little Kṛṣṇa actually says and does in the course of the poem. This is not simply a feature of the general predilection in *mahākāvya* for extended description over action or emotional display. Kṛṣṇa's extreme taciturnity and general passivity stand in marked contrast to the tendencies of most of the other characters in the poem. It seems fairly clear that the physical restraint and emotional reserve of Māgha's Kṛṣṇa represent for him something of an aesthetic and ethical ideal—one to be admired, even if it cannot be fully emulated.

It is in the verbal realm that this restraint of Kṛṣṇa's is most clearly evident. In an epic of many long speeches, Kṛṣṇa remains almost totally silent throughout. His total verbal output through the entire poem comes to no more than 16 verses; fewer than almost any other speaking character,[17] and shorter than most of the individual speeches found in the poem. The few verses he does speak are mostly ceremonial and spoken for politeness' sake—his greetings of Nārada in the first chapter (1.26–30) and of Yudhiṣṭhira (upon his arrival at the latter's city of Indraprastha—14.13–16), and his introduction to the debate between Uddhava and Balarāma in Chapter 2 (2.8–12).[18] At several key moments he

17. For example, Nārada (*Śiśupālavadha*, Chapter 1), Balarāma and Uddhava (Chapter 2), Dāruka (Chapter 4), Bhīma (Chapter 14), Śiśupāla (Chapter 15), and Śiśupāla's messenger and Sātyaki (Chapter 16).

18. The only other instances I have found are Kṛṣṇa's "Yes" (*om*) in 1.75, and his asking Yudhiṣṭhira for news of his kin (13.68). For the latter we are only told that conversation took place—no words are quoted.

avoids words entirely and relies on gestures and body-language to express himself: in Chapter 2 he conveys his assent to Uddhava's argument that he should attend the sacrifice simply by standing up (2.118). In Chapter 16, after listening to a punned message from Śiśupāla conveying both insult and conciliation, he responds only by raising a single eyebrow (*calitâikabhru*, 16.16—Kṛṣṇa's cousin Sātyaki takes this to be a sign that he should respond, and offers a lengthy rebuke to the messenger 16.17–37). At the close of Kṛṣṇa's brief speech in Chapter 2, Māgha directly comments on Kṛṣṇa's taciturnity, in a manner which leaves no doubt that he wishes to hold it up as an ideal of character:

> Kṛṣṇa, having thus taken up speech with just enough words for his meaning, stopped: Great ones are by nature of limited speech.[19]

So Kṛṣṇa's tendency to speak as little as possible is unmistakably set forth as a mark of his greatness.

Over and above this habit of verbal restraint, Kṛṣṇa's actions in the poem, at least up until the climactic battle scene in Chapters 19 and 20, are extremely circumscribed as well. Apart from the verbal exchanges in Chapters 1 and 2 and the final battle scene, the most extended descriptions of Kṛṣṇa are found in two chariot journeys he undertakes: from his own city Dvārakā to Mount Raivataka (the setting for the long "descriptive" chapters) in Chapter 4, and again from Raivataka to Yudhiṣṭhira's city Indraprastha in Chapters 12 and 13. In both, apart from entering and descending from his chariot (12.2, 13.18, 13.61), he remains almost entirely static, his actions to a great extent limited to such "passive" activities as seeing and hearing. The emphasis in both cases is overwhelmingly visual—Kṛṣṇa is viewed by the people of Dvārakā as he departs, and by those of Yudhiṣṭhira's country as he arrives and enters the city, with love, with wonder, and (in the case of the female observers) with sexual desire; Kṛṣṇa himself observes the two cities and their peoples, and returns their gazes. Indeed, both of these journeys call to mind nothing so much as festival processions, with the god, present in the form of an image, giving and receiving *darśan* from his devotees. Kṛṣṇa interacts with those around him not primarily through words or actions, but through his presence and his appearance. In conformity with implications of the moth/flame analogy, Māgha's Kṛṣṇa is consistently portrayed throughout the poem as a model of restraint and quiescence.

Along with this pattern of physical and verbal restraint, and underlying it, there is a great emotional reserve evident in Kṛṣṇa's character as well. He almost

19. *yāvad-artha-padāṃ vācam evam ādāya mādhavaḥ /*
virarāma mahīyāṃsaḥ prakṛtyā mita-bhāṣiṇaḥ // 2.13

never gives any outward sign of emotional reaction to any situation and, on the rare occasions when he does so, his responses are extremely subtle—most memorably, the raised eyebrow which appears as he agrees to kill Śiśupāla at the end of Chapter 1, and recurs as his sole overt response to the insulting message of Śiśupāla's envoy in Chapter 16. Again, this cannot be seen as simply the result of a general preference for physical description over the exploration of character, either in this poem or in *mahākāvya*s generally. There are many scenes and many speeches in the poem which revel in the display of intense emotion—the long description of the erotic play of Kṛṣṇa's entourage (in Chapters 8 to 10), the heated exchange between Bhīṣma and Śiśupāla (in Chapters 14 and 15), and the angry response of Kṛṣṇa's kinsmen to the insults of Śiśupāla's messenger (in Chapter 17)—yet Kṛṣṇa, present for all these scenes (as he is throughout the poem), is always a bystander. In the midst of the most heated exchanges, he remains always an ocean of calm.

If, as I would argue, this emotional and physical reserve is for Māgha the essence of Kṛṣṇa's character, and something which he wishes to hold up as an ideal, he could hardly have chosen a better story to build his poem around, or a better antagonist than Śiśupāla. Even in the *Mahābhārata* episode which serves as the source of Māgha's narrative (Poona ed. 2.33–42), Śiśupāla appears as a virtual poster-child for emotional excess. His character in the *Mahābhārata* is marked chiefly by a propensity for outraged and unrestrained verbal abuse, and in his own portrayal of Śiśupāla, Māgha makes this trait central and magnifies it to an almost absurd point. Māgha's Śiśupāla stands in the most extreme contrast imaginable to his Kṛṣṇa, a cauldron of insuppressible rage and resentment, spewing forth an unceasing stream of insults.

In Māgha's poem, Śiśupāla first appears as one of the guests at Yudhiṣṭhira's sacrifice. He takes center-stage in the narrative in the opening of Chapter 15, just after Bhīṣma has made a lengthy speech (14.54–87) praising Kṛṣṇa and recommending that he receive the gift which marks him as the most honored guest at the sacrifice. Upon hearing this praise of his rival, Śiśupāla is overcome with rage—a rage so intense that it produces marked physical effects, which are described in detail (15.2–12). To quote only a portion:

> Because of that honoring of [Kṛṣṇa], a very deep anger entered him,
> already hostile toward Kṛṣṇa, as a fever enters a body when its humors
> are aligned.[20]

20. *pura eva śārṅgiṇi savairam atha punar amuṃ tad-arcayā /*
manyur abhajad avagāḍhataraḥ samadoṣa-kāla iva dehinaṃ jvaraḥ // 15.2

As if rebuking the whole troop of kings, he slowly shook his head, the rays from its crown-jewels bouncing around, causing all three worlds to tremble intensely.[21]

Angrily spewing tears, the broad expanse of his cheeks flowing with dense sweat, his huge hands [/trunk] covered with drops of perspiration, he looked like a [rutting] elephant oozing liquid in three places.[22]

Showing contempt for all the kings, he violently shook his densely sweating body, scattering many drops of [sweat] water, like the primordial boar rising from the ocean of cosmic dissolution.[23]

The poet goes on to describe the fiery glow of Śiśupāla's body, the contortion of his face, and so on. The emphasis, as the disease metaphor in the first verse suggests, is on portraying Śiśupāla's anger as an unstoppable, physiological force. In the conclusion, the issue of self-control is again explicitly raised:

Thus he raged intensely—Indeed, upon obtaining what is greatly undesirable, even a restrained mind is affected; how much more so one naturally lacking all control?[24]

As before, we are told that it is in Śiśupāla's nature to act without such restraint. This is the nature that follows him from birth to birth, that drives him again and again into unwinnable conflicts with the gods, and that, according to Uddhava, will lead him to initiate an ultimately self destructive battle with Kṛṣṇa, without any active intervention on Kṛṣṇa's part. And just at this moment Uddhava's prediction proves true, as Śiśupāla puts his anger into words:

Fearless, he let the flower of his anger bloom through words—a flower whose growth of buds was produced by the emotional response born in his body, and which would bear fruit in the form of future battle.[25]

There follows a long torrent of abuse directed against Kṛṣṇa, based on the parallel passage in the *Mahābhārata* (2.33–41), though, of course, far

21. *abhitarjayann iva samasta-nṛpa-gaṇam asāv akampayat /*
lola-mukuṭa-maṇi-raśmi śanair aśanaiḥ prakampita-jagat-trayaṃ śiraḥ // 15.3
22. *sa vaman ruṣâśru ghana-gharma-vigalad-uru-gaṇḍa-maṇḍalaḥ /*
sveda-jala-kaṇa-karāla-karo vyarucat prabhinna iva kuñjaras tridhā // 15.4
23. *sa nikāma-gharmitam abhikṣṇam adhuvad avadhūta-rājakaḥ /*
kṣipta-bahula-jala-bindu vapuḥ pralayârṇavotthita ivâdi-sūkaraḥ // 15.5
24. *iti cukrudhe bhṛśam anena nanu mahad avāpya vipriyam /*
yāti vikṛtim api saṃvṛtimat kim u yan nisarga-niravagrahaṃ manaḥ // 15.11
25. *prathamaṃ śarīraja-vikāra-kṛta-mukula-bandham avyathī /*
bhāvi-kalaha-phala-yogam asau vacanena kopa-kusumaṃ vyacīkasat // 15.12

more elaborate.[26] In the end, Śiśupāla challenges Kṛṣṇa to fight and storms out to prepare for battle (15.63ff). So the moth/flame analogy finds its fulfillment, and Śiśupāla, following the dictates of his nature, brings destruction on himself.

In Māgha's poem, as in the *Mahābhārata*, it is primarily through his prolific capacity for insult that Śiśupāla's character is displayed. More than simply being a manifestation of a general tendency to act rashly and without restraint, his unquenchable passion for verbal abuse seems somehow especially integral to his personality. Even when he attempts to be conciliatory, he is somehow unable to refrain from insult. After Śiśupāla storms out of the assembly in the manner just described, he sends a messenger to Kṛṣṇa to seek a peaceful resolution to their conflict, but he cannot resist coupling his message of peace with a set of threatening insults—the two are artfully presented as a single punned message (16.2–15). We are told that it is the "creative" (*pratibhānavān*) messenger, rather than Śiśupāla himself, who combines the conciliatory and insulting messages in one (16.1, 16.42); still, the episode serves to reinforce the overall impression that verbal abuse is somehow central to Śiśupāla's nature: no words can come from him which do not bear an insult.[27]

While, in the assembly hall scene, a verbal assault would seem to be a natural outlet for his anger, it resurfaces later in a far less appropriate, but therefore perhaps more revealing, moment. It is at the climax of his final battle with Kṛṣṇa and proves to be, in fact, the very last moment of his life:

> Realizing that [Kṛṣṇa] could not be defeated with his arrows—straight, and completely pure, but not piercing the vital spots—the enemy [Śiśupāla] then struck him with verbal darts—crooked, impure, and passing through the vitals.[28]

All his weapons, human and divine, having proven useless against his foe, Śiśupāla in the end, and when it can make no more difference, reverts to form, and manages to get in one last insult. What he says we are not told, but in the very next verse he is finally beheaded by Kṛṣṇa's discus. Why so much emphasis should be given specifically to Śiśupāla's verbal offenses (both here and in the *Mahābhārata*) is not immediately obvious, but it is certainly meant to present a pointed contrast to the laconic reserve of Kṛṣṇa. Perhaps the point is, at least

26. The speech actually exists in two totally different versions. For a study of these two versions, their history, and their implications for the interpretation of Māgha's poem see Bronner and McCrea 2012.

27. On this combined message of conciliation and insult, and its role in the larger development of plot and character in the poem, see Bronner 2010, 79–82.

28. *śuddhiṃ gatair api parām ṛjubhir viditvā bāṇair ajayyam avighaṭṭita-marmabhis tam / marmâtigair anṛjubhir nitarām aśuddhair vāk-sāyakair atha tutoda tathā vipakṣaḥ* // 20.77

partly, to highlight the real impotence of Śiśupāla in his conflict with Kṛṣṇa. In the end, he is all talk. The final parting shot at Kṛṣṇa, when he is rendered helpless and presumably knows he is doomed, would seem to suggest as much.

In any case, I think it should be clear from the above that the polarity between absolute self-control and unrestrained excess, embodied in the two central characters of the poem, forms a central theme, if not *the* central theme, of the *Śiśupālavadha*—one which is carefully set out in the early chapters and continues as a leitmotif through the course of the poem.

Yet even if all this is granted, and it is conceded that the poem evinces a more concerted and systematic approach to broader issues of theme and character than its modern critics seem to have supposed, this still does not directly address the main charge that has been leveled against Māgha's work—that, whatever one may make of its ostensible plot and thematic content, the poem is vitiated by its long forays into irrelevant descriptions and figurative excess, which can only detract from the coherence and unity of the poem taken as a whole. I would like now to turn briefly to consider those portions of the text that have no obvious and direct bearing on the conflict between Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla, and to offer some preliminary thoughts on their relation to this central narrative and the themes that revolve around it.

C. Literary Techniques and Aesthetic Objectives

The most pointed criticism of the *Śiśupālavadha* has focused on the so-called "descriptive cantos"—Chapters 4 to 11 of the poem, which describe the mountain where Kṛṣṇa and his entourage make camp on their journey to Indraprastha, the flowers of all six seasons that they find there, their flower-gathering, water-play, drinking games, love-play, and so on. These are said to distract from and thereby "obscure" the main narrative, such that, whatever their intrinsic merit, they detract from the overall effectiveness of the work.

I think the most important point to be made regarding these extended descriptive passages is that, while they admittedly represent a vast digression from the central narrative thread, this digression occurring when and how it does, does not in any way stand in tension with this narrative, and in fact is fundamentally in harmony with the basic thematic of the poem as set forth in its initial chapters. It is essential to recall the stated purpose of Kṛṣṇa's journey and what has led up to it. The extensive and leisurely enjoyments of Kṛṣṇa and his followers displayed in these chapters cannot appropriately be seen as a diversion from Kṛṣṇa's mission to kill Śiśupāla, for the simple reason that Kṛṣṇa *is not on* a mission to kill Śiśupāla. Despite Kṛṣṇa's promise to Nārada, an explicit decision

has been made not to directly initiate a confrontation, but to wait for Śiśupāla to do this himself. Thus, the relaxed, unhurried, and decidedly pleasure-oriented expedition of the Yādavas is entirely appropriate to the circumstances. It is appropriate to the mood as well. We have seen that, in accord with his divine and all-sufficient nature, Kṛṣṇa's character is marked by a general quietism and by a decided *lack* of intensity. The leisurely journey to Indraprastha is entirely in keeping for him, and builds on rather than undercuts the picture of his character as it was set forth in the earlier chapters.

Moreover, the descriptive sections of the poem are not quite so divorced from the main story as is generally made out to be the case. Kṛṣṇa plays at least a small role in most of the descriptive chapters, though his activity is mostly of the "passive" sort mentioned earlier—seeing, hearing, and receiving the attentions of others. In the description of Mount Raivataka, which comprises the fourth chapter, it is through Kṛṣṇa's eyes that we first see the mountain (4.1–17), and to Kṛṣṇa that the extended description of the mountain by the charioteer Dāruka is addressed (4.19–68). After hearing Dāruka's speech, Kṛṣṇa desires to enjoy the mountain scenery (5.1), and it is this that ushers in the Yādavas' exploration of the place. The following two chapters, in which the flowers of all six seasons growing in the forest are described, and Kṛṣṇa and his followers enter the forest to enjoy its beauties, are explicitly framed as a devotional episode—the six seasons are said to bring forth their flowers all at once in order to serve Kṛṣṇa (6.1), and it is this act of devotion that induces him to enter the forest with his followers (6.79, 7.1). Likewise the eleventh chapter, the song Kṛṣṇa's bards sing to wake him in the morning, can be seen as basically devotional in character. It is only in Chapters 8 to 10, those with a specifically erotic content, that Kṛṣṇa is totally absent. The reasons for this are nowhere spelled out, but it is in keeping with the basically quiescent and emotionally muted character of Māgha's Kṛṣṇa that he should take no direct part in the love-play depicted here.

In any case, these three chapters aside, all the descriptive sections of the poem are provided with at least a minimal frame linking them to Kṛṣṇa. This is not to say these passages are not digressive, or that the specific descriptions they contain are necessarily linked in any intimate way with the larger themes of the poem—most of the verses describing the mountain, for instance, could easily be used to describe any mountain in any poem. But these descriptions are linked, however tenuously, to the overall framework of the narrative, and that framework is one in which these extended digressions do not detract from, but rather enhance, the easy-going and relaxed mood that the poet is evidently seeking to create.

In light of the thematic analysis of the *Śiśupālavadha* offered above, one can likewise offer a principled defense of Māgha's extensive and elaborate figuration,

not merely as an aesthetic end in itself, but as a tool which specifically subserves the overall goals of the work viewed as a whole. In particular, I think it can be shown that Māgha systematically deploys figures of similitude and identification (whether punned or not) in the service of his general drive, discussed above, to reduce rather than heighten dramatic tension in his poem. Māgha uses these figures throughout the poem to create a web of identifications around Kṛṣṇa, which, like Nārada's story of Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla's prior incarnations, serves to continually reaffirm Kṛṣṇa's absolute divinity, his overwhelming power, and the certainty of his victory over Śiśupāla. These figures are used to collapse boundaries of time—identifying the present Kṛṣṇa with his own prior self and calling to mind his previous triumphs, in this birth and others—and boundaries of personal identity—identifying him with other beings and natural forces, again affirming his limitless power and his status as "abode of the world." Examples can be found throughout the poem, but the whole range of applications these identifications are put to is well-exemplified in the opening of Chapter 3, which describes Kṛṣṇa's departure from Dvārakā as he sets out for Yudhiṣṭhira's sacrifice. To quote just a piece:

> Leaving the northern region and taking a southward course, like the sun, gentle, his desire for battle departed, Hari set out for Indraprastha.[29]
>
> Since it was not right for the sun to touch that world-honored (Kṛṣṇa) with his rays (/feet), even though they purify the world, therefore a parasol, vast and beautiful as the full moon, was held above him.[30]
>
> Standing in between two moving yak-tail fans which were white as lotus fibers, he took on the appearance of the ocean with streams of the divine river Gaṅgā falling on both sides—something which had never been seen before.[31]
>
> The great, multi-colored radiance of the jewels on his headdress mimicked the form of Mount Govardhana, its wealth of stones flowing with various minerals.[32]

29. *kaubera-digbhāgam apāsya mārgam āgastyam uṣṇâṃśur ivâvatīrṇaḥ / apeta-yuddhâbhiniveśa-saumyo harir hariprastham atha pratasthe* // 3.1
30. *jagat-pavitrair api taṃ na pādaiḥ spraṣṭuṃ jagat-pūjyam ayujyatârkaḥ / yato bṛhat-pārvaṇa-candra-cāru tasyâtapatraṃ bibharāṃ babhūve* // 3.2
31. *mṛṇāla-sūtrâmalam antareṇa sthitaś calac-cāmarayor dvayaṃ saḥ / bheje 'bhitaḥ-pātuka-siddha-sindhor abhūtapūrvāṃ rucam amburāśeḥ* // 3.3
32. *citrābhir asyôpari mauli-bhājāṃ bhābhir maṇīnām anaṇīyasībhiḥ / aneka-dhātu-cchuritâśma-rāśer govardhanasyâkṛtir anvakāri* // 3.4

It seems as if his chest had arranged on it a peacock-feather pendant, familiar from his youth, due to the glow from the sapphires embedded in the tips of his shining golden earrings.[33]

His glittering armlets illumined him with their vast brightness, which was great due to their having been polished by rubbing against the points of the peaks of Mount Mandara [during the churning of the ocean].[34]

He shone with his fingernails, naturally red and covered with the rays from the red gemstones set in his bracelets, as if they were even now bathed in the blood born from tearing the chest of the enemy of the gods [Hiraṇyakaśipu].[35]

If two streams of the celestial Gaṅgā were to fall through the sky, then his chest, dark as a tamāla-tree and adorned with a string of pearls, could be compared with this.[36]

He wore a gem [the Kaustubha], the essence of the ocean's waters, which lit up the sky with its radiance—a gem in which the whole world, contained in a reflection, looked as if it was dwelling within his own body.[37]

His dangling belt of pearls, hanging on its string and reaching down to his feet, looked like the continuously flowing water of the Gaṅgā springing up high from his toe.[38]

Here, in the space of just ten verses, Kṛṣṇa is identified with his own self as a youth, when he lifted up the mountain Govardhana to protect the cowherds from a storm (3.4, 3.5), with his prior incarnation as the Narasiṃha (3.7), who tore apart the asura Hiraṇyakaśipu (himself a previous incarnation of Śiśupāla), and with his unborn, divine self Viṣṇu who (by some accounts) held Mount Mandara during the churning of the ocean (3.6), and from whose toe the stream

33. *tasyôllasat-kāñcana-kuṇḍalâgra-pratyupta-gārutmata-ratna-bhāsā /*
avāpa bālyocita-nīla-kaṇṭha-picchâvacūḍā-kalanām ivôraḥ // 3.5
34. *tam aṅgade mandara-kūṭa-koṭi-vyāghaṭṭanôttejanayā maṇīnām /*
baṃhīyasā dīpti-vitānakena cakāsatām āsatur ullasantī // 3.6
35. *nisarga-raktair valayâvanaddha-tāmrâśma-raśmi-cchuritair nakhâgraiḥ /*
adyotatâdyâpi surâri-vakṣo-vikṣobhajâsṛk-snapitair ivâsau // 3.7
36. *ubhau yadi vyomni pṛthak pravāhāv ākāśa-gaṅgāpayasaḥ patetām /*
tenôpamīyeta tamāla-nīlam āmukta-muktālatam asya vakṣaḥ // 3.8
37. *tenâmbhasāṃ sāramayaḥ payodher dadhre maṇir dīdhiti-dīpitâśaḥ /*
antarvasan bimba-gatas tad-aṅge sākṣād ivâlakṣyata yatra lokaḥ // 3.9
38. *muktāmayaṃ sārasanâvalambi bhāti sma dāmâprapadīnam asya /*
aṅguṣṭha-niṣṭhyūtam ivôrdhvam uccāis tri-srotasaḥ santata-dhāram ambhaḥ // 3.10

of the river Ganges is said to issue (3.10). Likewise, he is identified with the sun (3.1), the ocean (3.3), and the night sky (3.8). He is said to be too pure to be touched by the rays of the sun, and to contain within himself the whole world (through its reflection in the Kaustubha gem he wears on his chest).[39] While this passage possesses a somewhat higher concentration of these identifications than may be found elsewhere, they are otherwise fairly typical of what is found in both brief and extended descriptions of Kṛṣṇa throughout the poem. Māgha's Kṛṣṇa is forever enmeshed in a dense web of associations which continually remind us that he cannot possibly fail, that acts such as the killing of Śiśupāla are routine for him, and that the entire universe exists within him and is subject to him.

Here too, then, we can see a fundamental harmony at work between the descriptive and figurative techniques employed in constructing the individual verses of Māgha's great work and the larger thematic and narrative strategies which inform and shape the whole. This technique, of course, represents only one aspect of Māgha's figurative method, but it provides a good example of how the micro- and macro-level aspects of a work like this can work together to achieve a unified effect, and gives the lie to the naive supposition that figurative intensity and sophistication are by nature inimical to theme and character development.

D. Conclusion

If it is granted that the foregoing reading of the *Śiśupālavadha* has any merit, one would have to say that modern critics of Sanskrit poetry (the few who have paid any heed to the poem at all, that is) have rather radically missed the whole point of Māgha's enterprise. Most of the brief and dismissive assessments quoted above begin with a core of basically valid observations—that Māgha's work abounds in description and figurative play, that the plot is fairly minimal for a work of its size, and that it is comparatively lacking in dramatic tension. But the conclusion typically drawn on the basis of these observations—that the work, whatever its technical merits, basically fails as a piece of poetry—seems to be driven by a stubborn refusal to make any effort to appreciate the work on its own terms. Significant is the frequency with which these assessments allude to the *Śiśupālavadha's* failure as an "epic" (see Keith, Kunhan Raja, and Warder, quoted in note 1). The standard against which the poem is measured and found

39. A gem itself obtained at the churning of the ocean—another emblem of Kṛṣṇa's divine past.

wanting is unmistakably an extrinsic one. That is to say, the poem is faulted for failing to do what we all (somehow) know epics are "supposed" to do. Conspicuously lacking is any attempt to determine, or even ask, if these things are what Māgha himself actually sought to do in his poem. It would seem that the reflexive labeling of the poem (and of the *mahākāvya* genre more generally) as "epic" has served to impede, rather than to facilitate, the effort to make sense of and to assess the poem as a specific literary object in its own right. The stock assessments of the Śiśupāla quoted above tell us far more about the pigeonhole "epic" than about the complex and marvelously individual poem being shoved into it.

It is worth noting, briefly, that replacing the western derived pigeonhole of "epic" with ones drawn from within the tradition would likely be no more helpful in elucidating the real aesthetic goals of the *Śiśupālavadha* or assessing with what degree of success it meets them. Attempts to read Sanskrit poems through native categories have centered mostly on viewing them through the lens provided by the theory of rasa—emotional mood or "flavor." The idea of rasa was first elaborated in the theory of drama (in the [fifth century?] *Nāṭyaśāstra*), but was first seriously applied to non-dramatic poetry by the literary critics of ninth and tenth century Kashmir, who held that every literary work should have a single predominant emotional mood (out of a generally accepted list of nine such moods). This dictum has often been retroactively applied to poems such as the *Śiśupālavadha* so as to give a general characterization of their central aesthetic objectives—for example, by the (fourteenth century) critic Mallinātha, who notes briefly in the introduction to his commentary on the poem that "the hero in this [poem] is the blessed Kṛṣṇa, and the predominant emotional mood is the 'Heroic'."[40] Yet, anachronisms aside, this kind of assessment again tends to reduce the poem to a type. By casually assigning the poem to the broad and generic category of "heroic" poetry, it avoids, and may even serve to suppress, the crucial question of just what is special and unique about the heroism of Māgha's Kṛṣṇa, and about the emotional mood that is generated through the portrayal of a hero most notably characterized by his near total lack of detectable affect.

If we are to work toward a responsible and adequately nuanced treatment of the great works of Sanskrit poetry, and a fortiori, of the Sanskrit literary tradition more broadly, it is essential that we attempt to make sense of each poem as a unique object in its own right, which, while it may in some cases be usefully elucidated through terms and categories drawn from either western or indigenous critical traditions, can never simply be uncritically reduced to them.

40. *netā 'smin yadu-nandanaḥ sa bhagavān; vīraḥ pradhāno rasaḥ...* (*Śiśupālavadha*, p. 2).

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7

Kāvya with Bells On

Yamaka *in the* Śiśupālavadha*

Or, "What's a flashy verse like you doing in a great poem like this?"

Gary Tubb

śriyaḥ patiḥ śrīmati śāsituṃ jagaj
jagan-nivāso vasudeva-sadmani
vasan dadarśâvatarantam ambarād
dhiraṇyagarbhâṅgabhuvaṃ muniṃ hariḥ[1]

Śrī's husband Hari, in Whom the world dwells,
while dwelling, to govern the world, in Vasudeva's
glorious house, saw coming down from the sky
the sage who is Hiraṇyagarbha's son.

From the first words of Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha*, his original audience would have had hints of what the poem would offer. They would have recognized in its opening word *śriyaḥ* a challenging reference to the

* A portion of the treatment of Māgha's fourth canto in this paper reworks material from two oral presentations: "Principles of Organization in the Śiśupālavadha," read in the "New Approaches to the Study of Sanskrit Kāvya Literature" panel at the 14th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, November, 1985; and "True Ornament or Jingling Defect: The Problem of Flashy Poetry in the Sanskrit Great Poem," presented in the University Seminar on Indology, Columbia University, May, 1998.

1. *Śiśupālavadha* 1.1. Except where noted, I use Mallinātha's recension of the text.

Kirātārjunīya of Māgha's great predecessor Bhāravi, which begins with the same word, and would have found, in the entwinement of that word within the remarkable density of wordplay that immediately follows it, promise of bettering Bhāravi's achievement.

The displacement of the adjective *śrīmati* to bring it near the opening word, the continuation of its word-binding alliteration in the following word *śāsitum*, the clever repetition of *jagad* across the boundary of verse-quarters, the persistence of sound effects throughout the deployment of the apparent contraction that follows, embedded in the words *jagannivāso vasudeva-sadmani vasan*, and above all the holding back of this participle *vasan* until the next half of the verse in separation from its locative, putting the audience on notice that they are dealing here with a higher level of poetic control, which is then confirmed by the clever use of the participle *avataran* to refer to the sage after having just mentioned Kṛṣṇa's avatar status, together (we must presume) with other surprises now beyond our grasp in our current dearth of information about the Sanskrit poets (including, for all we know, such delights as the playful use of the word *śrīmati* as a vocative as well, if Māgha, like many poets, had the habit of reciting his poems first to his wife, before spreading them more widely)—all this announces the arrival of a real bell ringer of a poet.

An equally important announcement is made in the surprise of the final line of the verse. Here, in contrast to the density just described, nearly an entire quarter of the verse is expended in doing little more than revealing, in a curiously roundabout way, the identity of the sage who will now be described—a change of pace made all the more interesting by the peripheral status of the sage Nārada to the plot of the poem. By this time, Māgha has already said enough about Kṛṣṇa to place his audience firmly in possession of all they need to know to situate him within a plot whose outlines are old news to them, and therefore the opening description that is being launched is not of the hero, as Bhāmaha might have preferred, or even of his opponent Śiśupāla, as Daṇḍin would have allowed, but instead of a character who will eventually get around to reporting on the opponent of the hero before disappearing from the poem. This too is borrowed from the opening of the *Kirātārjunīya*, which begins with the report of a spy on the activities of the other camp. But in Bhāravi's poem the informant begins speaking in the fourth verse, while here we have another thirty verses to go before the sage will open his mouth. In the meantime we will be treated to a description not only of the landing of Nārada but also of his reception and honoring, in a scene filled with images of the interplay of radiance between him and his divine host.

This expressive leisureliness is emblematic of the expansion that Bhāravi's procedures will receive in the hands of Māgha, who repeatedly takes brief

passages in Bhāravi's poem and turns them into entire cantos, dressing them out in layers of enhancement along the way. Although Māgha's lingering on the rituals of hospitality is actually quite relevant to the plot of the poem, which is very much concerned with the honoring of guests, the preponderance of description over action that it foreshows has been decried in most modern accounts of the poem as a departure from the poem's real subject. But Māgha has been honest from the beginning about its real subject. Most of the final line in the opening verse is given to the labelling of the sage, but not all of it. At the very end of the verse the poet returns to the subject, who gets the last word and the resulting emphasis, and the explicit point of the verse is not that the sage was descending from heaven or that he was prepared to report on the opponent: it is that Hari saw him. The poem creates, and recreates, before our eyes the entire experience surrounding an extended event in the life of Kṛṣṇa, imagined and brought to life as appearing before his eyes, with as much vividness and fullness as the poet can achieve, dwelling on the variety of that experience as produced by and reflected in a corresponding variety of poetic techniques.

That variety is at its most dazzling in a portion of the poem that focuses entirely on a panorama presented to the eyes of Kṛṣṇa, the description of the mountain Raivataka in the fourth canto of the poem, and it is there that I would like to begin an examination of how Māgha puts shifting patterns of poetic effort to work in his poem.

A. Māgha of the Bells

My choice of the fourth canto as a starting point for investigating Māgha's innovations is supported by a traditional nickname of his. We know from the author of the oldest surviving commentary on his poem, Vallabhadeva, that the poet came to be called Ghaṇṭā-Māgha, that is "Bell-Māgha" or "Māgha of the Bells," because of the admiration felt for one particular verse in his poem, which happens to be a verse in the the fourth *sarga*.

A.1. Belling the Elephant

The verse that gave Bell-Māgha his name occurs in the middle of a canto devoted entirely to a description of the Raivataka mountain group, at what is now called Girnār, in the Kathiawar peninsula of Gujarat. It was on the way from Dvārakā to Indraprastha, where the Pāṇḍavas were staging the Rājasūya consecration of Yudhiṣṭhira, so that Kṛṣṇa passed by the mountains on his way to the ceremony. In verse 4.20 the view is being described to him by his charioteer, who speaks of

the mountain as being so tall that the sun and the moon, as they rise and set, can be seen at the mountain's sides rather than above it:

udayati vitatôrdhva-raśmi-rajjāv
ahima-rucau hima-dhāmni yāti câstam
vahati girir ayaṃ vilambi-ghaṇṭā-
dvaya-parivārita-vāraṇêndra-līlām (*Śiśu.* 4.20)

When the sun is rising as the moon is setting,
each with its ropes of rays stretched upward,
this mountain has the pomp of a lordly elephant
caparisoned with a pair of hanging bells.

The image is certainly striking, but perhaps the question is still likely to arise in the mind of modern readers of this verse, even those who read it in a better translation than mine, of why it provoked so much admiration. Several people have attempted to answer this question.

In his history of Sanskrit *kāvya* literature, for example, Siegfried Lienhard discusses this verse in his section on the readers of Sanskrit *kāvya* and what appealed to them.[2] Among his explanations he mentions the interplay of conventional comparisons—it was quite common to compare a mountain to an elephant—with new and surprising imagery. Lienhard goes on to talk about three particular words in the verse. First, he mentions the name used here for the sun, *ahima-ruci*, which is a word that means literally "having non-cold radiance," and which Lienhard views as having been invented by Māgha for the benefit of the play on *hima-dhāman*, which is a fairly common word for the moon. Second, he mentions the skillful compound *raśmi-rajju*, "ray-rope," which metaphorically identifies the rays of light reaching upwards with ropes from which bells could be hung. And third, he mentions the intentional ambiguity in the word *vitata*, which means "stretched" or "extended," because this is the word which in ordinary Sanskrit first springs to mind for the stretching out of a rope, such as a rope that something is hung from, and also for the widespread extension of rays of light, and so it manages once again to collapse two very common meanings into a single image where they interact with each other.

For Lienhard this attraction to the achievement of a single verse is characteristic of the attitude of the connoisseur of Sanskrit *kāvya*:[3]

He sees the special qualities of a work above all in the individual details, new points, often in the elaborateness of the composition but, with the exception of dramatic works, pays little attention to the text

2. Lienhard 1984, 36.
3. Lienhard 1984, 34.

> as a whole which, even in poetry of the major form, is often completely eclipsed by the brilliance of a complete master of art on a small scale displayed in a section, a single stanza or even in a sentence.

And Lienhard also describes a corresponding shift of attention on the part of the poets themselves from the whole to the part and from action to description, a change in which he sees Bhāravi as the historical turning point.[4]

A.2. The Pointed Verse

This focus on the construction of individual verses had been described long ago by Louis Renou in his insightful article *Sur la structure du kāvya*, which was based primarily on his study of Bhāravi. There he took up essentially the same question as the one that confronts us in the fame of Māgha's verse, not in connection with this particular verse, but in general terms: why is it that some Sanskrit poetry that was said to be so great may be not unusually interesting to us in translation?

He too spoke of the goal of compression in his remarks on this question:[5]

> It does not matter much that from our point of view the statements of *kāvya* often appear to lack any point, indeed to be banale in terms of form and of subject matter. The interest that the author had in formulating them lies in the most diverse factors, which sometimes are not apparent at first sight—for example, in the opportunity they offer for a play on words, an alliteration, a pun—or else it is their density itself which is instructive, just as in grammar, where it happens that the thing being taught counts less than the manner in which it is taught. Here as well, the subject matter gives way to the form—the author has been able to avoid all dispersion, to arrange his words and his phrase so as to obtain the maximum effect compatible with the simplicity of the idea.

4. Lienhard 1984, 185.

5. Renou 1959, 3: *Peu importe si, de notre point de vue, les maximes du k. apparaissent souvent dénuées de <pointe>, voire banales quant à la forme et au fond. L'intérêt qu'a pris l'auteur à les formuler réside dans les facteurs les plus divers, qui parfois n'apparaissent pas au premier coup d'œil: par exemple, dans l'occasion qu'elles offrent à un jeu verbal, une allitération, une parono-mase; dans le contraste avec l'image qui les illustre. Ou bien c'est leur densité même qui est instructive comme en Grammaire où il arrive que la chose enseignée compte moins que la manière dont elle est enseignée, ici également, le fond le cède à la forme l'auteur a su éviter tout éparpillement, arranger ses mots et sa phrase pour obtenir le maximum d'effet compatible avec la simplicité de l'idée.*

Now, the "point" that Renou is talking about here is the same word in French and in English: it is the word we use for the "point" of a joke, which is similarly a moment of compression delivering a combination of familiarity and surprise. *Kāvya*, like comedy, aims at producing the surprise of sudden recognition, and each verse of a Sanskrit *mahākāvya* is intended to present some such achievement, even if on a small scale. Renou himself made this clear in an earlier remark in the same work:[6]

> In contrast to the epic, the stanza of *kāvya* aims at a point, that is to say at the expression of an idea, or of an image, complete in itself, and which once it has been grasped in its totality unleashes a statement more or less unexpected, forming a sort of defiance of the rational order of things, of natural expression.

While I cannot improve on Renou's general comments, further items could be pointed out in this particular verse that contribute to the compression and surprise that Renou talks about, a combination often referred to in Sanskrit as *camatkāra*. There are, for example, phonetic factors in the verse that, like its elements of imagery, also involve coalescence.

To mention only one such item: this verse is a good example of an attribute of Māgha's style that is praised by Sanskrit critics, the *śabdālaṅkāra* or quality of sound called *śleṣa*,[7] literally "coalescence." This is the property by which the transition across word boundaries is softened through a subtle repetition of sounds, and especially by the repetition of phonemes from one word to the next, but with some other sound intervening. In our verse this would be the *-ati* and *-iti* at the beginning, the *ra-* as the first syllable of both *raśmi* and *rajjau*, the repetition of *hima*, and so on. These are not types of alliteration that jump up and grab one by the throat, but their total effect is to make the verse smoother and more pleasing than it would otherwise be, and it does constitute another form both of repetition and of coalescence.

In reality we will never know the full range of reasons why this particular verse seemed special to the pandits, not only because we do not have the same awareness of the literature of the past that they had, but also because the Sanskrit critics, and above all the Sanskrit commentators, do tend to focus on small details in the information they choose to share with us.

6. Renou 1959, 3: *Contrairement à l'Épopée, forme poétique de type dilué dont la strophe ne comporte pas d'unité essentielle, la strophe du* k. *vise à une* pointe, *c'est-à-dire à l'expression d'une idée (ou d'une image) complète en soi et qui dégage, une fois saisie dans sa totalité, un énoncé plus ou moins inattendu, formant une sorte de défi à l'ordre rationnel des choses, à l'expression naturelle.*

7. Not to be confused with *śleṣa* in the sense of double meanings. For details on this *śabdaguṇa* see Tubb 1985.

A good example of this focus in the works on poetics is that our verse is included in what has become the standard treatise on Sanskrit poetry, the *Kāvyaprakāśa* of Mammaṭa, not in order to praise its overall effect, but only to serve as an illustration of one particular way of implying a simile, in this case by saying that the mountain has the pomp or graceful beauty (*līlā*) of an elephant, since logically speaking only an elephant can actually have an elephant's grace.[8] And such details are certainly important in understanding the workings of poets such as Māgha; David Smith, for example, has discussed this same word in his study of Ratnākara's *Haravijaya*, a *mahākāvya* heavily influenced by the *Śiśupālavadha*.[9]

In Sanskrit commentaries such as those of Mallinātha, this focus on individual verses is usually unrelenting, being built into the style of their remarks, which is based on the way that the *mahākāvya*s are presented orally in traditional Sanskrit classes, one verse at a time.

It is therefore a matter of special interest that our verse happens to be a participant in a pattern of arrangement that is mentioned by Mallinātha in one of the few places in his commentaries on the great *mahākāvya*s where, as we shall see, he chooses to comment in detail on matters extending throughout a lengthy section of the poem. It is to those more widely situated virtues of Māgha's verse that I would like to call your attention in what follows.

A.3. The Larger Setting

The essential features of the pattern that interests me most will become clear from a glance at the verses immediately preceding and following our verse 4.20.

The preceding verse is the first one within the canto in which the description of the mountain is put in the mouth of Kṛṣṇa's charioteer. It is a bitextual verse, presenting two parallel meanings using the techniques of *śleṣa* that Yigal Bronner has already described to us. The double identity at work here, as in the famous description of the mountains in the fifth canto of Bhāravi's poem, is of the mountain and the god Śiva:

ācchāditâyata-dig-ambaram uccakair gām
ākramya saṃsthitam udagra-viśāla-śṛṅgam
mūrdhni skhalat-tuhina-dīdhiti-koṭim enam
udvīkṣya ko bhuvi na vismayate nagêśam (*Śiśu.* 4.19)

8. *Kāvyaprakāśa* under *nidarśanā*, example 436: *atra katham anyasya līlām anyo vahatîti tat-sadṛśīm ity upamāyāṃ paryavasānam.*

9. Smith 1985, 91–92.

Who on earth would not be amazed to see this lord of mountains,
so tall that it fills the wide horizons and the sky
yet reaches to the earth, where it stands with broad peaks so high
that the horn of the moon trips across its summit.
[Who would not be amazed to see Lord Śiva here on earth,
sitting astride the tall bull with the sharp, thick horns,
wearing wide space as His only garment,
with the crescent moon dangling on His head.]

In Bhāravi's poem the comparison between Śiva and the mountain is carried on throughout a series of verses, as is appropriate to both the plot and the subject of that poem, but in Māgha's poem this particular comparison is only part of an ever-shifting array of images, and the emphasis is on Kṛṣṇa, who is the hero and subject of the poem and who is also, in this canto, both an observer of the mountain scene and the person being spoken to. The verse immediately following 4.20 reminds us of these things by tying the scene to Kṛṣṇa's own visual appearance.

In doing so it does not use the *śleṣa* technique we have just seen, but instead employs the different but closely connected technique called *yamaka*, literally "twinning," in which the string of phonemes that can be interpreted in two different ways is actually uttered twice—once for each meaning—rather than only once as in instances of *śleṣa*. In this and in all following examples of *yamaka*, I have presented the twinned sequences of sounds in bold type:

vahati yaḥ paritaḥ kanaka-sthalīḥ
sa-haritā lasamāna-navâṃśukaḥ
acala eṣa bhavān iva rājate
sa haritāla-samāna-navâṃśukaḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.21)

Shining with the vivid hues
of plots of gold scattered among the bluegrass,
this mountain is as radiant as you
in your new yellow dhoti.

Here the counterpart of the dark color of the grass is of course the dark complexion of Kṛṣṇa himself. The *yamaka* consists in the fact that the sequence of sounds making up the second quarter of the verse is repeated as the fourth quarter of the verse, but with an entirely different meaning, in such a way that the second quarter describes the mountain while the fourth quarter describes Kṛṣṇa. The particular techniques by which the differences in meaning are achieved are the same as those we have already seen at work in *śleṣa* verses, including the use both of homonyms (for example, the word *aṃśuka*, which

means both a ray of light and a garment) and of homophonous sequences subjected to resegmentation throughout (for example, *sa-haritālasamāna-* versus *sa haritāla-samāna-*).

The main point I would like to make about the triad we have just seen—a *śleṣa* verse followed by an alliterative verse followed by a *yamaka* verse—is that this is not a random pattern but a regular one that runs throughout the entire canto. Māgha's fourth *sarga* consists precisely of twenty-three such triads in succession (borrowing the first verse of the next canto to fill out the last triad), in each of which the third verse is a *yamaka* verse and (with a few elaborations to be described) the middle verse is an alliterative one with a comparatively richer image to offer, while the first verse delivers an even denser content, often through the use of *śleṣa* but often using other techniques instead.

The persistent pattern of these triads is reinforced by other features as well. For example, in every triad (following a brief introductory section in another meter) it is only the first of the three verses that is in the running meter used throughout the main portion of the canto (in this instance *vasantatilakā*), while the second and third verses are in meters that vary throughout the passage (in our example, *puṣpitāgrā* for the middle verse and *drutavilambita* for the third verse), with rare meters being chosen more often for the third verse than for the second.

The role of *yamaka*s in the tripartite construction of this particular passage, as well as the regular patterns of change in the choice of meter and in the type of poetic ornament used, have all been noted by the commentator Mallinātha in his remarks on the poem, and I will discuss his comments later in examining these patterns in greater detail.

Many other persistent patterns, usually escaping mention by the commentators and critics, are at work in various places and for various purposes throughout the poem—so many, in fact, that in this paper I will be able to focus only on those patterns that involve the use of *yamaka*. I hope to describe the structure of three cantos in which *yamaka*s are used throughout the canto, with a quite distinct pattern in each. In addition to this triadic pattern used in the fourth canto, we will see that the sixth canto uses a monolinear pattern involving the repetition of a particular form of *yamaka* in verse after verse, again with a shifting of patterns in one portion of the canto and again with unusual metrical procedures, while the nineteenth canto uses instead a dyadic pattern, being composed entirely of a series of pairs in each of which the second verse always uses simple *śleṣa* of a type not requiring resegmentation, offsetting the first verse in the pair, which displays one of the forms of *yamaka* considered particularly difficult or another of the types of difficult compositions collectively called *citra*, or "flashy" poetry.

The details of these patterns, together with some observations on the differing uses to which they are put and their antecedents in earlier *mahākāvya* poetry, will be given in due course. But before turning to these details I would like to consider some of the theoretical problems that have been raised in the Sanskrit treatises on poetics in connection with the use of difficult *yamaka*s and other forms of *citra* poetry.

B. *Yamaka* and the Problem of *Citra*

The contempt so often expressed by modern scholars for the role played in the *mahākāvya* by *yamaka*s and other devices involving extensive special effects had a forerunner in the disreputable status accorded these techniques in treatises on the theory of mood and suggestion that came to dominate the discipline of Sanskrit poetics. Although the relevance of that poetics to the *mahākāvya* in particular is a difficult issue in itself,[10] a consideration of its view of these devices will be useful in trying to understand Māgha's use of them. Before turning to the relevant texts I will say a word about the sorts of techniques included in this category.

B.1. The Range of Citra *Poetry*

In its narrowest sense the term *citra*, literally a "picture," refers to *citrabandha*s or verses containing particular arrangements of sounds that lend themselves to pictorial presentations in which the syllables of the verse are written in configurations representing physical items. Many of these—the sword, the drum, the chariot wheel, and so on—are associated with battle, giving rise to the assumption that these come from a tradition of physically writing verses on the items in question.[11]

More widely, through the galaxy of other meanings enjoyed by the word *citra*, including "vivid," "striking," and "variegated," the term includes a range of devices aiming at spectacular effects. The translation I prefer, "flashy" poetry, reportedly goes back to Richard Gombrich,[12] but it could also be called "special effects" poetry (or, as my children might put it, "XF" or "Xtreme" poetry), or perhaps "virtuoso" poetry.

Both Bhāravi and Māgha include in their poems a canto devoted to *citra* verses. These are treated in Section 4.3 below, but a preview of their inventories

10. Smith 1985, 33ff.

11. Dasgupta and De 1947, 179 n. 1, in reference to "the puerile tricks of citrabandha" displayed by Bhāravi; Smith 1985, 135.

12. Smith 1985, 44 n38.

may be had by peeking at Table 7.6 on page 191. There are three main categories of items represented in these cantos.

As the table shows, the *yamaka* itself is one of the most important contributors, including the difficult forms in which the sequence that is repeated comprises an entire verse or half a verse, as well as reverse *yamaka*s in which a series of syllables is the same as another series read backwards (that is, an extended palindrome), and, in Māgha's canto, also a reverse equivalence *yamaka* in which a sequence delivers the same meaning when read backwards, but with a different arrangement of words.

A second category is that of the *citrabandha*s already mentioned, which are in fact arrangements of sounds related to the *yamaka*. These "pictorial" verses are often misunderstood as being equivalent to European topiary verses in which a verse is made pictorial by the way in which its lines are typeset on the page; an example is George Herbert's poem "The Altar" in his book *The Temple*, a poem that is displayed in the shape of an altar, although it could have been typeset in any of a number of other ways. In contrast to this, the Sanskrit *citrabandha*s are not created by typography, but by the interlacing of syllables inherent in the words themselves.

A simple example is the zigzag verse, vividly named the *gomūtrikābandha* or "cow urine arrangement," in reference to the fact that the trail left in the dust by a cow who is urinating as she walks forms a perfect zigzag pattern. Māgha's offering in this category is *Śiśupālavadha* 19.46, describing the arrival of the elephants at the scene of the battle:

pravṛtte vikasad-dhvānaṃ sādhane 'py aviṣādibhiḥ
vavṛṣe vikasad dānaṃ yudham āpya viṣāṇibhiḥ (*Śiśu.* 19.46)

Undaunted even at the outset
of the battle with its expanding tumult,
the tuskers were raining copious ichor
as they reached the fray

The zigzag arrangement of the syllables can be shown in a diagram covering the left-hand side of the verse:

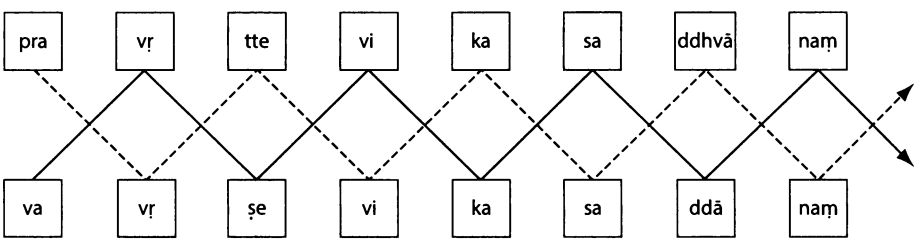


TABLE 7.1: Gomūtrikābandha (*Śiśupālavadha* 19.46ab)

Consideration of the diagram will show that the figure depends entirely upon a simple arrangements of sounds, such that in both halves of the verse the series of odd-numbered syllables is identical, with the even-numbered syllables being irrelevant to the figure. While the diagram is instructive and amusing, the arrangement itself does not depend upon the diagram either for its existence or for its apprehension—with some practice, a reasonably attentive listener can detect a zigzag verse as being such, merely by hearing it recited.

It is also worth noting that although the production of the pictorial representation creates an aura of impressive difficulty, as an arrangement of sounds the *gomūtrikābandha* is actually considerably less difficult than a *yamaka* of the same length, since it is essentially just a *yamaka* in which every other syllable is allowed in, whether it matches or not. But this figure is at the simpler end of the spectrum.

A somewhat more difficult zigzag pattern is involved in the *murajabandha* or "drum arrangement." Māgha's example once again describes elephants at the beginning of the battle:

sā senā gamanârambhe rasenâsīd an-āratā
tāra-nāda-janā matta-dhīra-nāgam an-āmayā (*Śiśu.* 19.29)

That army, in beginning to move,
was unceasing by its taste (for battle);
with high-roaring men, and frenzied
but steadfast elephants, it was indestructible.

In the associated diagram the representation of the zigzag patterns resembles the lacing on a drum.

Of the constructions in this category used by Māgha in his *citrasarga*, the wheel at the end of the canto is probably the most elaborate, and is particularly clever in concealing a signature. Other arrangements also considered *citrabandhas* involve verses that read the same on several vectors or along other paths such as spirals. These tend to have names that are supposedly shared by particular military formations, a point made by Māgha himself in a verse we will come to. The most difficult of these is probably the *sarvatobhadra* or "omnivalent" arrangement, a sort of magic square that, as it name claims, can be read in all directions to give the same sequence of syllables.

A third category included in the *citrasargas* involves yet another group of arrangements of sounds, but this time defined negatively rather than positively. These are the verses in which only certain sounds are allowed. The category includes both verses in which only one particular consonant is allowed (*ekākṣara*) or in which two consonants are allowed (*dvyakṣara*), as well as those in which a category of sounds is excluded, such as the *atālavya* verse, in which no palatal sounds of any kind may be used. These can be the most difficult type of verse to understand.

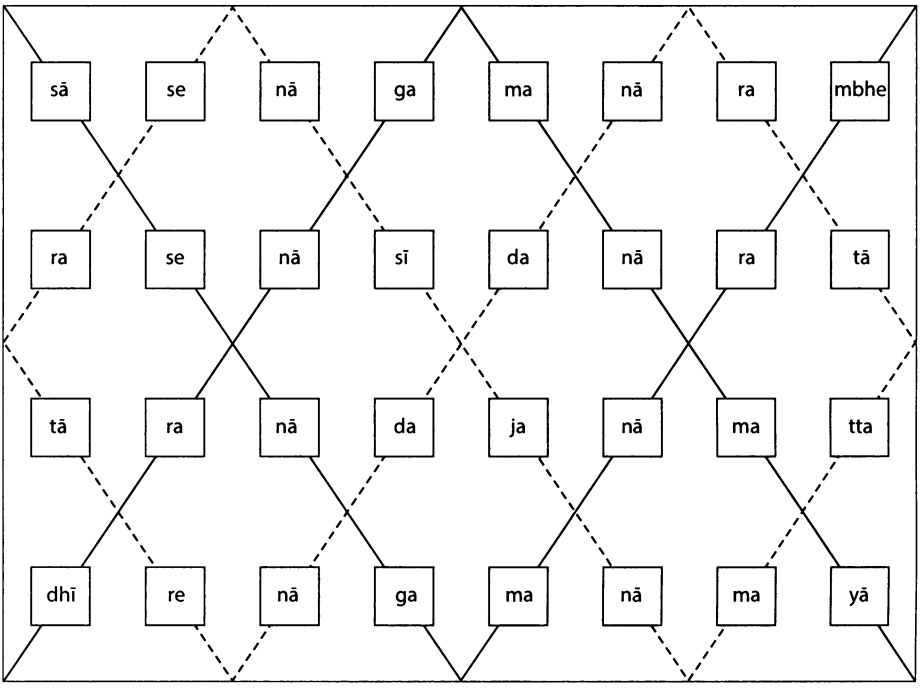


TABLE 7.2: Murajabandha (*Śiśupālavadha* 19.29)

This category once included vestiges of the old riddle form (*prahelikā*) in which sounds were hidden or distorted; in Bhāravi and Māgha the only survivor in this category is the *gūḍhacaturthapāda*, in which the syllables of the fourth quarter of the verse are contained within the preceding quarters. This is not a particular impressive feat in itself, but it fits as well as any of the other *citra* items into some theories of why such verses are associated with descriptions of battle formations and combat.

One further type of verse needs to be mentioned here. Verses using *śleṣa* or double meanings make up, as I have said, fully half of the verses in Māgha's *citra* canto. Whether they are to be included in the category of *citra* is a complicated question on which opinions differ.

B.2. Citra *Poetry and the Poetics of Mood and Suggestion*

The foundational work in the poetics of suggestion, the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana, not surprisingly defines the the concept of *citra* in terms of its relationship to suggestion and mood:

> Where the suggested meaning is predominant, we have the type of poetry called *dhvani*. Where it is subordinate, we have *guṇībhūta-vyaṅgya*, that is, the poetry of subordinated suggestion. That which is

> different from these, namely poetry which lacks *rasa*, or an emotion, *bhāva*, which lacks the power to reveal any particular suggested meaning, which is composed only by relying on novelties of literal sense and expression, and which gives the appearance of a picture, is *citra*. [Tr. Ingalls et al.][13]

But next he explains what he means by "picture":

> It is not real poetry, just as a picture is not the real thing. For it is an imitation of poetry. One type of this *citra* is verbal *citra*, such as difficult arrangements, *yamaka*s, and the like. Semantic *citra* differs from verbal *citra* and may be exemplified by poetic fancy and such figures when they carry no suggested sense, and lack any final meaning of *rasa*, because of the predominance of the literal meaning.

Here we have a new twist on why *citra* poetry is called a "picture"—not because it is striking or vivid, and not because of its pictorial history, but because it is only a pale imitation of the real thing, which, in Ānandavardhana's opinion, is suggestive and emotionally evocative poetry.

Given this stance by Ānandavardhana, it comes as something rather striking in itself that in the most influential of the general treatises on poetics based on his teachings, the *Kāvyaprakāśa* of Mammaṭa—where all poetry is divided into hierarchical levels with *citra* at the very bottom—the examples that are given in the description of *yamaka* poetry are drawn not from some benighted hack but from Ānandavardhana himself, who turns out to have composed, among his other works, a century of verses dedicated to the Goddess, the *Devīśataka*, filled with the most extreme examples of *citrabandha*s and *yamaka*s.

In this section of his work Mammaṭa does not stoop to give examples of *citra-bandha*s, nor does he offer any apology on Ānandavardhana's behalf in introducing the examples of *yamaka*s taken from him. Instead he delivers another straightforward blast against the value of the various types of *yamaka*, saying of them *tad etat kāvyântarguḍubhūtam*,[14] which I take to mean "These are a goiter on the body of poetry." Translations of this unpleasant remark offer several interpretations of just what kind of *guḍu* is meant here,[15] but it is clear at least that he is talking about something that should not be inside poetry. It is not something that can function properly within the inner workings of the poetry, but is rather a superficial excrescence, which like a goiter is both unappealing and useless.

13. *Dhvanyāloka, vṛtti* on 3.41–42 (p. 36). All translations of the *Dhvanyāloka* are from Ingalls et al. 1990. Translations from all other Sanskrit texts are mine.

14. *Kāvyaprakāśa* p. 504, ad 9.117 on *yamaka*.

15. Smith 1985, 45 thinks it refers to worms.

In an article on the *Devīśataka* Ingalls gives two reasons why Ānandavardhana could have written such a thing despite his theoretical remarks.[16] The first reason was that he was very good at writing such verses, and all he needed was an excuse to write them. The second reason, the excuse for writing these things which he himself had excoriated in no uncertain terms, comes to light in an interesting way: it is to be discovered in the secret innards of his final construction in the poem. A good many verses at the end of the poem all go together to provide the syllables for the most impressive of all the *citrabandha*s, the one called the *mahācakra* or Great Wheel, composed of the contents from twenty verses—sixteen verses for the sixteen spokes, and four more verses for the rim—each of which has other things to do as well.

As I have explained, the essential feature of such *bandha*s is not the picture itself but the underlying interlacing of syllables. And the impressive thing about the *cakrabandha* in particular is not just that these syllables at the junctures are read twice, but that there are also inner circumferences as well, the syllables of which will also go together to form correct and meaningful utterances in Sanskrit. The inner circles of Māgha's *cakrabandha* in his *citrasarga*, for example, spell out the message "This is Māgha's poem, the *Śiśupālavadha*." Ānandavardhana's secret message is more impressive, for it actually forms yet another metrically correct verse. Its purpose is to tell how the poem came to be composed: the Goddess came to Ānandavardhana in a dream and ordered him to write this poem the way that he did, so that he had a divine mandate for the production of this very flashy poetry.

In the course of giving this explanation, Ingalls maintains that scholars who have justified such productions by claiming that Ānandavardhana had allowed *citrakāvya* in praises of the gods had misinterpreted his statements. This question of the proper setting for *citra* verses is discussed even in earlier works on poetics, and the remarks in those works on the connection between *citrakāvya* and *mahākāvya* are directly relevant to our examination of Māgha's poem.

B.3. Citra *and the Poetics of the Mahākāvya*

The question of the proper locale for *yamaka* comes up first, as far as I can see, by implication in Daṇḍin's work on poetics, but is addressed more directly in the work on poetics by Rudraṭa, who was, as it happens, a contemporary of Ānandavardhana's in Kashmir. Rudraṭa says, in his closing verse on *yamaka*s, that *yamaka* verses should be used thoughtfully, in ways that are accessible to

16. The text and its implications are discussed, with translations of selected verses, in Ingalls 1989; see also Smith 1985, 44ff.

the reader, and that the proper setting for them is primarily the *sargabandha*, that is, the *mahākāvya* genre to which Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* belongs.[17]

A commentator on Rudraṭa writing in the eleventh century, Namisādhu, who has the distinction of being the first in a long line of important Jain writers on Sanskrit poetics, is more specific:[18]

> When he says "thoughtfully," he means after considering in which *rasa* it might be used, and in which it might not. For *yamaka, citra*, and *śleṣa*, when they are used in a *rasa* poem, might ruin the *rasa*, especially if the *rasa* is an erotic or compassionate one, for these types of poetry are conducive to a demonstration of the virtuosity of the poet, but they are not conducive to the evocation of *rasa*.

He goes on to say, however, that they are used in certain poems, and gives a list of the places where *yamaka* verses are appropriate.[19] First, they are used in *khaṇḍakāvya*s, that is in fragment poems. "Fragment poem" meant compositions, recognizable or not—the texts are not clear on this—as poetry in the style of a *mahākāvya*, but certainly smaller than a *mahākāvya*. The category includes things like Ānandavardhana's *Devīśataka*. Second, they are used in praises of the gods. Third, they are used in descriptions of battles. It may be implied here that praises of the gods and descriptions of battles are items within the context of a *mahākāvya*, and I will return to this point. Namisādhu goes on:[20]

> They are to be used primarily in *sargabandha*s, that is, in *mahākāvya*s, the "great poems." But they should be used very sparingly indeed in plays, stories, and prose poems.

It seems clear that in saying this Namisādhu is not simply extrapolating from the less specific comments of Rudraṭa, but is drawing on his observation of the actual practice of the great poets of the preceding centuries.

There were clearly differences of opinion among Sanskrit theorists on the evaluation of those poets and their traditions. It is no accident that the writers on poetics who do not mention the *yamaka* in places where it might be expected are

17. *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 3.59: *iti yamakam aśeṣaṃ samyag ālocayadbhiḥ sukavibhir abhiyuktair vastu câucityavidbhiḥ / suvihita-pada-bhaṅgaṃ suprasiddhâbhidhānaṃ tad-anu viracanīyaṃ sarga-bandheṣu bhūmnā.*

18. *ālocayadbhiḥ … tathā vastu ca viṣaya-vibhāgam ālocayadbhiḥ. yathā kasmin rase kartavyam, kva vā na kartavyam. yamaka-śleṣa-citrāṇi hi sarase kāvye kriyamāṇāni rasa-khaṇḍanāṃ kuryuḥ. viśeṣatas tu śṛṅgāra-karuṇayoḥ. kaveḥ kilêtāni śakti-mātraṃ poṣayanti, na tu rasavattām.*

19. *prayogas tu teṣāṃ khaṇḍa-kāvyeśu devatā-stutiṣu raṇa-varṇaneṣu ca.*

20. *bhūmnā bāhulyena sarga-bandheṣu mahākāvyeṣu nāṭaka-kathâkhyāyikādiṣu punaḥ svalpam evêty arthaḥ.*

the same writers—Udbhaṭa and Vāmana, for example—who seem oriented towards the Sanskrit play rather than the Sanskrit *mahākāvya*. One famous theorist among that group was Lollaṭa, known for his commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a work on drama, rather than for writing a general treatise on poetics of the kind that might take up the *mahākāvya*. Lollaṭa condemns not only the *yamaka*, but also the very requirement of having descriptive cantos, which is at the heart of the *mahākāvya* tradition in some accounts:

> As for effort expended on the description of rivers, mountains, oceans, elephants, horses, cities, and so forth, in major works, we believe that it gives no reward beyond a reputation for virtuosity on the part of the poet. Categories such as *yamaka*, and special arrangements such as the Great Wheel, are exceedingly obstructive to *rasa*. This is just egotism, or a flow of sheep.[21]

By "a flow of sheep," of course he means that the poets are simply copying each other, and doing it because it was what poets did. And it was what poets had come to do; it seems clear that a tradition did develop not only of using *citra-kāvya* in *mahākāvya*s but also more specifically of using it in particular settings—of using *citrabandha*s in cantos on war, of using *yamaka*s in cantos on mountains, and of using using verses involving double meanings in cantos on the sending of messages.

I think it is also clear in actual practice that these devices are used in different ways for different purposes. Before leaving Ānandavardhana I would like to quote his explanation for why it is that *yamaka*s are not conducive to to the evocation of moods, which will prove useful in trying to understand these variations:[22]

> Only a figure which can be composed in the course of one's preoccupation with *rasa*, and that requires no separate effort in itself, is acceptable as an ornament in suggestive poetry. This character of being extraneous attaches to *yamaka*s and to difficult arrangements of words. A great poet can produce with a single effort some matters that contain *rasa* together with figures of speech. But for composing *yamaka*s and the like, he must make a separate effort, even if he is well-skilled in composing them. Therefore these figures cannot play a part subordinate to *rasa*. There is no objection to using *yamaka*s and the like as elements

21. Quoted in Hemacandra, *Kāvyānuśāsana*, p. 307: *atas tu sarid-adri-sāgara-naga-turaga-purādi-varṇane yatnaḥ kavi-śakti-khyāti-phalo vitata-dhiyāṃ no mataḥ prabandheṣu yamakânuloma-tad-itara-cakrâdi-bhido 'ti-rasa-virodhinyaḥ abhimāna-mātram etad gaḍḍarikādi-pravāho vā.*

22. *Dhvanyāloka* 2.16 f. (p. 268).

> subordinate to *rasābhāsa* (that is, to only apparent evocation of *rasa*), but this subordination is impossible in the case of delicate *rasa*s such as love, which are the soul of suggestive poetry.

There are two important principles here. One is that *yamaka* has its place, as long as it is not used where a particularly delicate *rasa* is being evoked; this is a matter of what the Sanskrit theorists would call *aucitya*, propriety. The second is that the essential problem is one of the requirement of effort—what we might call the ergonomics of *citra*. It takes special effort to produce such things, and this is important not only because it distracts the poet, but also because it produces a corresponding obligation of special effort on the part of the reader.

C. *Yamaka* in the *Mahākāvya*

There is little to say about *mahākāvya*s before Kālidāsa, since the only ones that survive are the two by Aśvaghoṣa, and his repetitions are mostly forms of simple rhyme rather than *yamaka*.[23]

There is also little of use for our present purposes in the early descriptions of *yamaka* in the works on poetics, despite the long history of these references (*yamaka* is one of the four basic *alaṅkāra*s covered in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*) and the extended attention given to it by Daṇḍin (who devotes the last third of his book to *yamaka, citra*, and *prahelikā*s) and several other early writers. Their descriptions are almost entirely formal, consisting of catalogues of the various possible places within a verse where the repeated syllables can occur, and have almost nothing to say about the actual uses of the device within a longer poem.[24]

The one early account that may be useful for us is the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, which in addition to illustrating the rules of grammar also illustrates *alaṅkāra*s, including *yamaka* in the first part of its tenth canto. He at least is using the device within the setting of a *mahākāvya*. Like Daṇḍin and the others he is also attempting to illustrate the full range of possibilities, so that his use of *yamaka* cannot exemplify effects that depend upon the repeated use of a particular variety of *yamaka*, but for the types of *yamaka* that he does illustrate he has something to teach us about the possibilities of the device.

C.1. Bhaṭṭi and the Potential Uses of Yamaka

In dealing with the use of *yamaka*s in *mahākāvya*s before Māgha, it is convenient to take up Bhaṭṭi outside the chronological series of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, and Māgha,

23. Johnston 1975, Introduction xc–xciii.

24. There is a good account of early *yamaka* in Söhnen 1995.

not only because he does not participate in some of the developments in which they are involved, but also because if I were to insert him into the chronological list I would not know where to put him.

Even if we look only at the material provided in the *yamaka* section at the beginning of Bhaṭṭi's tenth canto, the evidence relevant to comparative dating is confusing. Renate Söhnen has examined the definitions of *yamaka* offered by Bhaṭṭi and other early writers and on that basis would place Bhaṭṭi before Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha.[25] If we look at literary borrowings within the poetry of the *yamaka* section, however, there are possible connections not only with Kālidāsa and Bhāravi, but even with Māgha, and the direction of borrowing in each instance is not immediately clear.

A case in point is Bhaṭṭi's very first *yamaka* verse in the second verse of the canto:

raṇa-paṇḍito 'grya-vibudhāri-pure
kalahaṃ sa rāma-mahitaḥ kṛtavān
jvalad-agni rāvaṇa-gṛhaṃ ca balāt
kalahaṃsa-rāmam a-hitaḥ kṛtavān (*Bhaṭṭī* 10.2)

Skilled in fighting and honored by Rāma,
the capable foe created discord,
forcibly making Ravāṇa's house,
enjoyed by wild geese, blaze with fire.

This seems to me to be connected with a fine *yamaka* verse in Bhāravi's description of the mountain range:

vikaca-vāriruhaṃ dadhataṃ saraḥ
sa-kalahaṃsa-gaṇaṃ śuci mānasam
śivam agâtmajayā ca kṛtêrṣyayā
sa-kalahaṃ sa-gaṇaṃ śuci-mānasam (*Kir.* 5.13)

It had the pure Lake Mānasa, with its flocks
of wild geese and fully opened lotuses;
it had Śiva, calm-minded in the midst of his Gaṇas
and of quarrels with Pārvatī when she was jealous.

Here the *yamaka* fits better in the context of Bhāravi's verse, and my impression in general is that Bhāravi is not particularly good at composing *yamakas*—witness the frequency with which he fails to achieve two separate meanings in a repetition, even using words that other poets have handled impressively—and that he was happy to borrow them wherever he could. But it would take a fair

25. Söhnen 1995, 519.

amount of nerve to rip one out of such a context as this. The situation is similar to that provided by the close verbal agreement between Bhāmaha's statement in *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 2.20 that a *mahākāvya* should not need need too much commentary, and Bhaṭṭi's boast in 22.34 that his poem needs a lot of commentary.

I think the simplest solution is to assume that Bhaṭṭi was a clever rascal with a sense of humor. He has at least been clever enough here to use the word *kalaha*—which is probably not the word he would have chosen for it if he had not needed to come up with a *yamaka*—to tell us something about what he will be using the *yamaka*s for here, because many of them have to do with the discord or conflict between the previous identity or designation of things and what happened to them in the fire that Hanumān brought to Laṅkā.

To understand this it might be helpful to think briefly at this point about the sorts of effects that might be achieved through *yamaka*, and in particular about the possible implications of the repetition of the sounds that have dual meaning, in contrast to the practice in a *śleṣa* situation of presenting the sounds only once.

What is the impact of such a repetition? Its most obvious effect is to make those sounds obvious, and thereby to call attention both to the sounds and to their possible meanings.

In individual instances of *yamaka*, this emphasis may be put to most of the uses that Yigal Bronner has already described as uses of *śleṣa*. In particular it can be used to point out both comparisons and contrasts. But in calling attention to the sounds themselves it may also provide a somewhat more intense opportunity to examine a particular word or group of words—the repetition of the word forces us to think twice about its significance in a way that may not be so compelling in *śleṣa*, simply because in some instances of *śleṣa* we may either take the second meaning or ignore it, while in every instance of *yamaka* we are compelled to find a distinct meaning to go with the second utterance of the sounds.

Probably the most important difference between *yamaka* and *śleṣa* is that while *śleṣa* may lend itself to treatments of disguised characters because it involves two meanings masquerading as one, *yamaka* is more likely to be used in connection with two identities that are both on public display, just as it involves two utterances in plain and separate hearings, whether these two identities are simultaneous, as we will see in Kālidāsa's opening description of Daśaratha, with its exposure of the contrasts and balances in his character, or sequential, as we will see in the fear and destruction brought about by violence in the battle cantos of Bhāravi and Māgha, and as can be seen in Bhaṭṭi's description of the effects of the fire in Laṅkā.

Beyond this, an extended performance of *yamaka*-style repetitions, like any regular repetition of sounds that goes on long enough, may also have a sort of

hypnotic or musical effect, that will build cumulatively as long as the performance continues. In some poems that are actually designed for ritual use—the *Gītāgovinda* is a famous example—the production of a trance-like state may be the actual result. What I have in mind is something much milder, but nonetheless noticeable in the reading or hearing of *yamaka* poems such as the *Ghaṭakarpara*. We will see versions of this in the treatment of the seasons by Kālidāsa and by Māgha.

Since Bhaṭṭi gives only one example of each distinct type of *yamaka*, he is likely to exemplify only the first, or analytical, mode of *yamaka* applications, and not the second. And in fact many of his examples do seem to be used to make a sort of linguistic comment.

We have already seen how Bhaṭṭi announces the theme of discord in his first *yamaka* verse; and in many of the *yamaka*s that follow, the effect is one of the deconstruction of an identity previously assumed to be stable—a sort of linguistic examination of the reliability of designations:

na gajā naga-jā dayitā dayitā
vi-gataṃ vigataṃ lalitaṃ lalitam
pramadā pra-madâma-hatā mahatām
a-raṇaṃ maraṇaṃ samayāt samayāt (*Bhaṭṭi* 10.9)

Mountain-born elephants, prized, were not protected;
flocks of birds vanished; the cherished was tortured;
young women became joyless, injured by running;
death without a fight came to the great because of fate.

In the same way he uses doublets to expose how actions may expand like the fire that caused them: he describes, for example, how once the city came into contact with fire it was gone, having melted quickly (***drutaṃ drutaṃ*** *vahni-samāgataṃ* ***gataṃ***, 10.11). It is not the only way in which he uses *yamaka*, but the examples do bring out one of the possibilities available in the device, and one that we will see put to good effect by other poets.

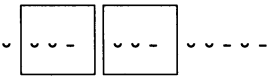
C.2 Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśa

To my knowledge the earliest example of an extended series of *yamaka* verses within a *mahākāvya* is found in the ninth canto of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*.[26] This passage is apparently the model for many of the features connected with the use

26. There are also many instances of *yamaka* in the eighteenth canto of the poem, but these are not arranged in a regular pattern. Instead they are used along with several other devices to produce a constantly varying series of plays on the names of the kings being listed, as a way of enlivening what would otherwise be a monotonous recital.

of *yamaka* in Māgha and in Bhāravi before him, including some things that can be seen in Bhaṭṭi as well, such as the association of *yamaka* both with the *drutavilambita* meter and with the use of a series of different meters.

The *yamaka* runs through the first fifty-four verses of the canto, and follows a very regular and simple scheme, in which the series of sounds composed by the second, third, and four syllables in the last quarter of each verse is repeated once:



The regularity of these repetitions, verse after verse, allows for the use of the hypnotic possibilities of extended *yamaka* performances, and the brevity of the series of sounds involved—confined to six syllables within only one quarter of each verse—also means that the poet has a relatively freer hand in selecting his *yamaka*s than he would have if he had to produce such a repetition in each quarter, or throughout the whole of one or more quarters. We might therefore expect, especially in dealing with a master poet such as Kālidāsa, that if there are meaningful ways in which the highlight provided by the *yamaka* can be put to use, we would find some of them here.

Whether these *yamaka*s are in fact put to more than decorative use is an issue raised by Yigal Bronner, who has mentioned this passage as an example of early interest in *śleṣa*-like phenomena,[27] and also as an illustration of the assumption on the part of the early Sanskrit poets that a speech-ornament is beautiful in itself:[28]

> The rhyme *rurudhire rudhireṇa* [in *Raghuvaṃśa* 9.23] has nothing to do with the verse's main image of Daśaratha's valor—his squelching of the sky-soaring dust raised by the enemy's troops with their blood.
>
> A depiction of the same image without resorting to *yamaka* would not have been considered lacking in any way. Moreover, the same image could have been augmented by a different sound repetition. The *yamaka*s in Kālidāsa's ninth chapter of the *Raghuvaṃśa* thus magnify the overall aesthetic value simply due to their own ear-pleasing sound. They are independent of the verses' imagery and are added to it by the general aesthetic guideline of "the more decorations—the prettier the verse."

This is clearly true where the image within the verse is concerned, considering it in isolation; a critic writing in Sanskrit would say that the relation between the *yamaka* and the image in question is one of *saṃsṛṣṭi* rather than *saṅkara*, as they

27. Bronner 1999, 35–36.
28. Bronner 1999, 72.

are not inextricably connected. But as Bronner also noted, the Sanskrit poets have "higher concepts of aesthetics" as well: "They compose, after all, whole poems and not just collections of *alaṃkāra*-centered single verses."[29]

In the hope that there might also be concepts deserving notice in the dimensions between whole poems and single verses, I would like to look for a while at the series of *yamaka* verses in which the verse referred to occurs. Once the instances of *yamaka* in Kālidāsa's poem are examined in that larger setting it is no longer so clear that their role is simply decorative. It is worth looking at the passage in some detail, both because of its particular significance as an ancestor of the *yamaka* practices of Bhāravi and Māgha, and because of its more general importance as the first, and perhaps still the best, example of the effects that the extended use of short *yamaka* repetitions can have. As I read the passage, it uses *yamaka* for several different purposes in succession, including both the lulling and the intoxicating modes of its musical or sensuous powers, and both the combining and contrasting modes of its linguistic or analytical powers.

In musical terms the opening of the passage seems intended to be a soothing song, reassuring in two ways, both as a diverting opportunity for relief after Aja's painful lament in the preceding canto, and as a lulling series of assurances that the kingdom has passed in an orderly way into the hands of a worthy king who will carry on his family's approach to ruling. From the opening of the poem we know that this approach was one of constant self-discipline, and that his ancestors were careful to temper their power with restraint and to avoid falling under the sway of their senses. This theme is emphasized in the first verse of the passage, and highlighted by a *yamaka* repetition: we are told that the kingdom passed from Aja to his son Daśaratha, a great warrior who had conquered his senses through concentration, and who "stood at the head both of those who are self-controlled and of those who protect" (*yamavatām **avatāṃ** ca dhuri sthitaḥ*).[30]

Here the *yamaka* delivers a linguistic comment on the nature of restraint and beneficence similar to one of the uses of such repetitions that can be seen in verses by Bhaṭṭi and Māgha and some other later poets. In the wording of the verse we can hear how Daśaratha put the "*ava*" in "*yamavant*"; for all his power he had a form of self-control from which the protection of others emerges. At the least the juxtaposition calls attention to this pair. And, while it is true that either word could be replaced with a synonym without destroying the literal meaning, it could be argued that the rhyming of the word *avatām* with the word *yamavatām*, of which it forms a segment, suggests a connection between the qualities to

29. Bronner 1999, 71.

30. *Ragh.* 9.1: *pitur anantaram uttarakosalān samadhigamya samādhi-jitêndriyaḥ / daśarathaḥ praśaśāsa mahāratho ya**mavatām avatāṃ** ca dhuri sthitaḥ.*

which the two words refer. Furthermore, the connection is of a kind that Bronner has skillfully described as important in the use of the related phenomenon of *śleṣa*: it involves two sides of a particular individual's character.

In many of the *yamaka*s in the verses that follow this, it is the same sort of connection that is awarded the highlighting provided by the *yamaka* slot in the verse, although given the short sequence of three syllables that Kālidāsa uses for repetition we must expect that the *yamaka* itself will usually contain only portions of each of the words to which he is drawing attention. For example, verse 3 refers to Daśaratha as both a remover of affliction and a member of the dynasty wielding Manu's rod of punishment (*śra**ma-nudaṃ manu-daṇḍa**-dharânvayam*).[31] Verse 4 assures us that although he was a king of divine glory he was also a lover of peace (*śa**ma-rate 'mara-te**jasi pārthive*).[32]

Notice that in each of these repetitions the words involved—compound nouns, for the most part—are arranged on either side of the invisible dividing line between the two triads of identical sounds. This is a result of a striking tendency on Kālidāsa's part to position word-breaks at that point in the *yamaka* quarter in each verse, in clear contrast to his usual practice in the other quarters of the verses. Although each quarter of a verse in the *drutavilambita* meter theoretically follows exactly the same metrical pattern, and although that pattern does not require a *yati* or caesura between the third and four syllables, Kālidāsa nearly always composes his *yamaka* quarters as if there were a break at that point, while more often than not he arranges to run words across that point in the other quarters, and increasingly so as one moves closer to the final quarter.[33] The effect is to make the *yamaka* repetition even more noticeable by adding a perceptible metrical pop in the middle of it, and thereby to bring into even greater prominence the words that he chooses to emphasize. The technique is one that we will see reused by Māgha, although, characteristically for him, in a more extreme form.[34]

31. *Ragh.* 9.3: *ubhayam eva vadanti manīṣiṇaḥ samaya-varṣitayā kṛta-karmaṇām / bala-niṣ ūdanam artha-patiṃ ca taṃ śra**ma-nudaṃ manu-daṇḍa**-dharânvayam.*

32. *Ragh.* 9.4: *jana-pade na gadaḥ padam ādadāv abhinavaḥ kuta eva sa-patnajaḥ / kṣitir abhūt phalavaty aja-nandane śa**ma-rate 'mara-te**jasi pārthive.*

33. I see only two verses in the entire passage in which there is not a word-break between the third and fourth syllables in the *yamaka* quarter: 9.21d (*a-**sama-bhā|sam abhā**sayad īśvaraḥ*) and 9.34d (*kusumitā**|su mitā** vana-rājiṣu*). For the other quarters such crossovers are much more frequent, occuring in 22 of 54 verses in *pāda* a, 28 of 54 in *pāda* b, and 31 of 54 verses in *pāda* c. In making these tallies I have counted verbal prefixes, as well as members of nominal compounds, as words; if verbal prefixes are not allowed to cross the line, the figures will increase to only 4 for the *yamaka* quarters, but will be much higher for the other *pāda*s.

34. See n. 52.

The same pattern is found in verse 7, which touches more closely on what will turn out to be the underlying reasons for this emphasis:

na mṛgayâbhiratir na durodaraṃ
na ca śaśi-pratimâbharaṇaṃ madhu
tam udayāya na vā nava-yauvanā
priyatamā yatamānam apāharat (*Ragh.* 9.7)

Not addiction to hunting, nor dicing, nor wine
adorned with the moon's reflection, nor a woman,
however young or how lovely, distracted him;
he held himself under control for success.

Similar contrasts continue: verse 8 explains that the king did not speak harsh words because he was devoid of anger (*na ... tena vāg apa-ruṣā paruṣâkṣaram īritā*),[35] and verse 9, somewhat more ominously, describes him as a friend to those who obeyed him but as iron-hearted to those who did not (*su-hṛd ayo-hṛdayo*).[36]

At this point the theme of restraint recedes as Daśaratha sets out on a circle of military conquests. On his return the word plays examining his character resume—verse 15, for example, says that while diligent, he had the splendor of the moon as well as that of fire (*an-alaso 'nala-soma-sama-dyutiḥ*),[37] But his diligence now has a new edge. His interest in weapons has become inextricable even from his relationships with women, a point that is highlighted with startling persistence in the *yamaka*s in three verses in a row: in verse 17 the description of the three kings' daughters who married him ends incongruously with the information that he had inserted arrows into his enemies (*duhitaro 'hita-ropita-mārgaṇam*);[38] verse 18 says that together with his three dearly beloved wives he ruled like Indra, being expert in the discipline of killing enemies (*harihayo 'ri-ha-yoga-vicakṣaṇaḥ*);[39] and verse 19 explains that his relationship with the women of heaven consisted of using his arrows to make them free from fear (*sura-vadhūr avadhūta-bhayāḥ śaraiḥ*).[40]

35. *Ragh.* 9.8: *na kṛpaṇā prabhavaty api vāsave na vitathā parihāsa-kathāsv api / na ca sapatna-janeṣv api tena vāg apa-ruṣā paru âkṣaram īritā.*

36. *Ragh.* 9.9: *udayam astam-ayaṃ ca raghûdvahād ubhayam ānaśire vasudhâdhipāḥ / sa hi nideśam a-laṅghayatām abhūt su-hṛd ayo-hṛdayo pratigarjatām.*

37. *Ragh.* 9.15: *upagato 'pi ca maṇḍala-nābhitām anuditânya-sitâtapavāraṇaḥ/ śriyam avekṣya sa randhra-calām abhūd an-alaso nala-soma-sama-dyutiḥ.*

38. *Ragh.* 9.17: *tam alabhanta patiḥ pati-devata am iva sagaram apagaḥ / Magadha-kosala-kekaya-sasinam duhitaro hita ropita-marganam.*

39. *Ragh.* 9.18: *priyatamābhir asau tisṛbhir babhau tisṛbhir eva bhuvaṃ saha śaktibhiḥ / upagato vinīṣuriva prajā harihayo 'ri-ha-yoga-vicakṣaṇaḥ.*

40. *Ragh.* 9.19: *sa kila saṃyuga-mūrdhni sahāyatāṃ maghavataḥ pratipadya mahā-rathaḥ / svabhuja-vīryam agāpayad ucchritaṃ sura-vadhūr avadhūta-bhayāḥ śaraiḥ.*

The military references conclude with the verse that Bronner quoted, which comes at the first of several transitions in the passage that are marked by verses beginning with the word *atha*. At these points Kālidāsa appears to have a special use for *yamaka* repetitions. Here is the first such juncture, which comes at the end of the militaristic part of the passage and at the beginning of Kālidāsa's famous description of the spring festival:

a-sakṛd eka-rathena tarasvinā
harihayâgrasareṇa dhanur-bhṛtā
dinakarâbhimukhā raṇa-reṇavo
rurudhire rudhireṇa *sura-dviṣām* (*Ragh.* 9.23)

atha samāvavṛte kusumair navais
tam iva sevitum eka-narādhipam
yama-kubera-jaleśvara-vajriṇāṃ
sama-dhuraṃ madhur a*ñcita-vikramam* (*Ragh.* 9.24)

Many a time the mighty archer,
fighting without assistance in front of Indra,
settled the dust of battle that rose toward the sun
with the blood of the enemies of the gods.

Then Spring returned, as if to serve
with his new blossoms that king of vaunted valor,
who in one person bore the same duties
as Yama, Kubera, Varuṇa, and Indra.

The special responsibilities of the four Lokapāla gods referred to are, as the commentator Mallinātha explains, mediation, donation, restraint, and lordship. But the aura of balance and control implied in this list is questioned in the sounds being echoed. Here, as Bronner has noted, the sounds repeated in the *yamaka* do not make essential contributions to the images presented in the verses. But they are more than decoratively relevant to the background of the verses, in calling attention rather urgently to factors that will loom large in the events toward which we are being led. The spring festival will involve a growing indulgence in intoxicating pleasures that will culminate in wine and, despite recent assurances, in the king's discovery that in fact he does feel an attraction to the joys of the hunt. And this will lead, as Kālidāsa could have expected his readers to know, through further scenes of mounting excitement ending in the terrible moment when the king shoots at a target he cannot even see, killing an innocent child in the process, and earning the curse that will be fulfilled in the banishment of Rāma.

I hear the words echoed in these *yamaka*s as being uttered not merely within the two verses but also beneath or behind them, as nearly subliminal remarks

made in the knowledge of where things are going, and also as comments on the smaller segments that these verses conclude and begin. In verse 23 the *yamaka* looks back on the description of the king's fatal attraction to weapons and whispers a warning of where it must lead (*rudhire, rudhire*); similarly, the repetition in verse 23 looks ahead to the end of the segment it introduces and tells us where it will end (*madhu, madhu*).

The segment that follows needs little explanation, as the approaches it uses became the model for many of the later *yamaka*-poems. While the use of *śleṣa* throughout an entire became specialized, as Bronner has explained, in the *dvi-sandhāna* poems that compare large stories, the smaller poems that use *yamaka* throughout tend to focus on the highly erotic description of a season, delivered in the *drutavilambita* meter, as pioneered here by Kālidāsa.[41] In this segment the modes are clearly those of intoxication rather than reassurance, and of joining rather dissecting, and for the details I will mention only how unrelentingly, in verse after verse, these modes cooperate with each other through the use of *yamaka*s highlighting the intermingling of intoxicants with the various participants in the scene: spring descends into the wooded region (*drumavatīm **avatīrya***, 9.26) and the birds and bees come to the lotus (*kamalinīm **alinī**rapatatriṇaḥ*, 9.27); intoxicating blossoms are placed on beloved women's ears (*ma**dayitā dayitā**-śravaṇârpitāḥ*, 9.28) while amaranth flowers make the bees buzz (*kuravakā **rava-kā**raṇatāṃ yayuḥ*, 9.29); the bakula becomes crowded with long lines of bees greedy for its nectar (*madhu-lolupair ba**kulam ā**kulam ā-yati-paṅtibhiḥ*, 9.30) while wine dispels the shyness of young women (*pra**madayā mada-yā**pita-lajjayā*, 9.31), and so on.

As this process of intermingling and intoxication continues, the *yamaka*s start to be used not to expose contrasts, as in earlier segments, but to deny disjunctions, as the hard beverages that are now brought out serve to blur previous distinctions; women give their men wine to drink that works as "love's friend, in whom there is no breaking of the mood" (*sma**ra-sakhaṃ rasa-khaṇḍ**ana-varjitam*, 9.36). By the end of this segment (more than twenty verses after its beginning), even a *yamaka* directly describing the king has become a kind of drunken stammering (*madhumanmadhumanmatha-...*, 9.48), and we are at another juncture:

tyajata mānam alaṃ bata vigrahair
na punar eti gataṃ caturaṃ vayaḥ
parabhṛtābhir atīva nivedite
*sma**ra-mate ramate** sma vadhū-janaḥ* (*Ragh.* 9.47)

41. For a survey of the later *yamaka* poems see Lienhard 1984, 222–23; see also Raghavan 1978, 192–95.

atha yathā-sukham ārtavam utsavaṃ
samanubhūya vilāsavatī-sakhaḥ
narapatiś cakame mṛgayā-ratiṃ
sa ***madhuman-madhu-man****matha-saṃnibhaḥ* (*Ragh.* 9.48)

"Stop acting proud, come on now, no more resisting;
the agreeable age of life, once gone, does not return."
When the female cuckoos had proclaimed Love's viewpoint,
the women turned to enjoyment without restraint.

Then, after enjoying the festival of spring
as he desired, in the company of amorous women,
the king, who looked like Viṣṇu, Spring, and Kāma,
felt desire for the passion of the hunt.

Here again I would maintain that the *yamaka*s surrounding this ominous turning point, again occurring at a narrative transition marked by the word *atha*, are not simply decorative, but contain warnings that are at some tension with the superficial gaiety of the ongoing description. They state plainly, against the now distant memory of the opening sobriety of this canto, exactly what the king has been up to (*ramate, ramate*) and address him accusingly as what he has become (*madhuman, madhuman*).

In the verse that immediately follows, an ironic reading of the *yamaka* seems almost required by the frankly apologetic tone of the superficial register:

paricayaṃ cala-lakṣya-nipātane
bhaya-ruṣoś ca tad-iṅgita-bodhanam
śrama-jayāt praguṇāṃ ca karoty asau
tanum ***ato 'numataḥ*** *sacivair yayau* (*Ragh.* 9.54)

He'll have practice in hitting moving targets,
in their fear and rage he'll learn about body language,
and by conquering fatigue he'll make his body strong—
being approved therefore by his ministers, he went.

But do we hear, as a disgruntled murmur in the *yamaka*, that he may in fact have been less than enthusiastically approved (*tanu-mato*) by them?

In any case it is too late; hunting gives the king a chance to try out new toys, and before long we see him nearly giddy in his gear, bearing down on the innocently ruminating *ruru* herd:

grathita-maulir asau vana-mālayā
taru-palāśa-savarṇa-tanucchadaḥ
turaga-valgana-cañcala-kuṇḍalo
viruruce ***ruru-ceṣṭita-bhūmiṣu*** (*Ragh.* 9.51)

Wearing a headdress fashioned of wildflower garlands
and body armor patterned in forest camouflage,
with his earrings dancing as his horses galloped
through lands where the antelope graze, he looked splendid.

But I wonder whether this *yamaka* too might not offer answers to questions the superficial text will not ask, such as what happened to the antelope (*uru cerur*, they went far away), and what became of their land (*vi-ruru*—no more *ruru*).[42]

The entire *yamaka* passage ends in yet another of the transitional verses beginning with *atha*, where once again the *yamaka*s in the pair of verses surrounding this word seem especially significant. The transition comes at the point at which the king actually takes up his weapon for the first time in the hunt, an event in which he is described as perfectly unconflicted; one reason for his mental ease may be that, as the first verse in the pair explains, the area had supposedly been secured beforehand:

śvagaṇi-vāgurikaiḥ prathamâsthitaṃ
vyapagatânala-dasyu viveśa saḥ
sthira-turaṅgama-bhūmi nipānavan
*mṛ**ga-vayo-gavayô**pacitaṃ vanam* (*Ragh.* 9.53)

atha nabhasya iva tridaśâyudhaṃ
kanaka-piṅga-taḍid-guṇa-saṃyutam
dhanur adhijyam an-ādhir upādade
*nara-varo rava-ro**ṣita-kesarī* (*Ragh.* 9.54)

Once his hunters and snarers were placed in the forest,
and it had been cleared of fires and of robbers,
with firm ground for his horses, together with ponds,
and stocked with deer, birds, and *gavaya*s, he entered.

Then, with no mental anguish, he took up his bow,
ready-strung, like a rainbow near the end of the rains
with its gold-colored lightning as string,
and, best of men, made it twang to enrage the lions.

The first verse emphasizes how thoroughly the area had been made safe and enjoyable for the well-armed king, but hidden among the wildlife, within the

42. Unfortunately, mobility over distance does not preclude extinction. WWF-India has reported that the black buck (called *kṛṣṇasāra* in Sanskrit), a relative of the *ruru* among the antelopes, has become an endangered species because of hunting for sport and habitat destruction, despite being the world's fastest land animal at distances longer than a cheetah's initial sprint (http://www.wwfindia.org/inform/endangered.jsp#black).

verse's *yamaka*, is an unprotected young boy who will never come of age (*a-vayo-ga*). As for the second verse, we may be sure that, as the *yamaka* reminds us, Daśaratha was the best of men, but does it also contain an echo of the thought that his present undertaking may be less than lofty (*avaro, avaro*)?

Be that as it may, now that the bow is in his hand the *yamaka*s come to an end, together with the *drutavilambita* meter that has carried them. Another eight verses in the *vasantatilaka* meter lead through the beginning of the actual shooting until the point where the king meets the irritated lions face to face. From there Kālidāsa shifts to a pattern of changing the meter in each verse, matching the mounting excitement, which grows through a dozen verses until the terrible moment when the little boy is shot (verse 9.75); the heartwrenching realization of this moment, in which the king's excitement comes crashing down (*hā tātêty ākranditam ākarṇya viṣaṇṇas* ...), is poignantly delivered in the staggering meter called "the drunken peacock" (*mattamayūra*), and then for the narration of the aftermath the poet returns to the *vasantatilaka* meter, which is used until the end of the canto in 9.82.

A great deal has been accomplished in the space of little more than half a hundred verses through the repetition of three syllables in each verse, providing one more example of how Kālidāsa can turn seemingly simple tools to great effect. It would be hard to find a better example of how to intertwine the uses to which extended short *yamaka*s can lend themselves, here by recording the disciplined balance of Daśaratha's character while also noting its tensions, and then by distracting us from the rise of his recklessness while also hinting at an awareness that his crime cannot be glossed over.

C.3. Bhāravi's Kirātārjunīya

Although Bhāravi, as the single most important model for Māgha, is of obvious relevance to our topic, I will say little about him here because the evidence for his influence on Māgha has been well documented,[43] and because we will be dealing with him separately in other chapters. Here I will mention only a few features directly connected with Bhāravi's and Māgha's use of *yamaka*.

The first is that there are two cantos in which Bhāravi has used extended *yamaka*s and which served as models for Māgha's use of *yamaka*s in similar settings. One is the description of mountains in Bhāravi's fifth canto; this was the model for Māgha's fourth canto, in which like Bhāravi he uses both *yamaka* verses and varied meters, although his handling of both techniques is considerable more complex and regular. The other is Bhāravi's fifteenth canto, which uses

43. See especially Jacobi 1889.

both *yamaka* verses and a wide range of *citrakāvya* devices, and is followed in both by Māgha in his nineteenth canto, again with at much greater length and much more regularly. Bhāravi also uses some *yamaka*s in his final canto, but this does not appear to have a direct parallel in Māgha.

The second point worth mentioning is that despite the relatively small number of *yamaka*s in his work compared to Māgha's, Bhāravi provides good examples of some of the uses of *yamaka* that parallel those we have seen at work in *śleṣa* verses.

As an example of the rotation of the subject and object of comparison, a technique referred to by Bronner in the setting of *śleṣa* as "syntactical *śleṣa*,"[44] consider the twinning of verse-halves in this description of Śivaś troops:

tad-gaṇā dadṛśur bhīmaṃ ***citra-saṃsthā ivâcalāḥ***
vismayena tayor yuddhaṃ ***citra-saṃsthā ivâcalāḥ*** (*Kir.* 15.35)

In amazement his troops, who were like mountains of wondrous form,
watched that terrible combat, motionless as if painted in a picture.

As an example of the examination of the trustworthiness of designations, consider this verse, in which entire halves are twinned:

syandanā no ca turagāḥ surêbhā vā vi-pattayaḥ
syandanā no ca tura-gāḥ su-rebhā vâ-vipattayaḥ (*Kir.* 15.16)

We have chariots, horses, elephants of the gods, and footsoldiers;
are they not swift, fast-moving, very loud, and reliable?

And as an example of the examination of identity through the use of negation, consider another remark made by Skanda to his troops:

mā vihāsiṣṭa ***samaraṃ sama-ran****tavya-saṃyataḥ*
*kṣataṃ kṣuṇṇâsura****-gaṇair a-gaṇair*** *iva kiṃ yaśaḥ* (*Kir.* 15.8)

O you to whom play and war are equal,
do not abandon this battle.
Why have you injured your glory, as if you were not Gaṇas,
when you are the ones who defeated the troops of demons?

Similarly, the following doublings seem intended to expose the inner capabilities of the objects to which the designations being repeated apply:

vane 'vane *vana-sadāṃ* ***mārgam mārgam*** *upeyuṣām*
vāṇair bāṇair *samāsaktaṃ* ***śaṅke 'śaṃ kena*** *śāmyati*

44. Bronner 1999, 231.

I wonder what can assuage the pain
attached to the sounding arrows
for the forest dwellers who have taken the path
of the deer, into the protecting forests.

A similar approach seems to be at work in the references to "terminator arrows" (***sāyakair avasāyakair***, 15.37), to the deployment of "fierce arrows with tips that wipe away danger" (***bhīma bhī-mā**rjana-phalânanāḥ*, 15.42), and to the troops that were "frightened, being surrounded by sharp arrows" (***bhītāḥ** śita-śarâ**bhītāḥ***, 15.31)

D. Māgha's *Yamaka*s

We turn now at long last to the three cantos in the *Śiśupālavadha* in which *yamaka*s are used in extensive patterns, in each instance illustrating in distinct ways Māgha's delight in taking up devices used by earlier poets and subjecting them to complex procedures of organization and elaboration.

My treatment of the first of these three, the fourth canto and its description of the mountains, is the fullest—undoubtedly far too full in places—while the other two were brought into my research only recently, and the *vyāpāraprādhyānya* nature of my work on them remains painfully obvious. For them I can give only summaries at this point.

D.1. A Thousand Points of Light: Māgha's Mountains

The fourth canto of the *Śiśupālavadha* is devoted, as I have said, to the description of a mountain, a topic of the canto presents the poet with the difficult task of sustaining the interest of his treatment throughout a long passage describing a single insentient object that in itself offers no natural basis for sequential progression through events, themes, or topics. The poet must find a way to achieve both variety and structure.

Māgha was given a considerable boost up in this endeavor by his predecessor Bhāravi. The fifth canto of his *Kirātārjunīya* is similarly devoted to the description of a mountain, and there the devices for attaining variety and structure, later employed so elaborately by Māgha, appear in simpler form. Structurally, the fifth canto of Bhāravi's poem begins with an introductory description in fifteen verses bound together by grammatical apposition. Bhāravi then turns the description over to a character in the poem, who speaks throughout the rest of the canto. In this second, and much longer, series of verses, the poet attempts to avoid the tedium that might result from such a lengthy and apparently random description by using two devices to introduce formal and verbal variety. One device is a

constant shift in meter from verse to verse, set against the usual practice of composing all but the last few verses of any one canto in a single meter. The other device is the use of the striking verbal ornament of *yamaka*.

In the fourth canto of his own poem, Māgha uses all these techniques, and does his best to outdo Bhāravi in the use of each of them. Like Bhāravi he begins with an introductory series of descriptive verses linked by grammatical apposition. You will find the basic structure of the canto laid out in Table 7.3.
You will see this opening section, consisting of verses 1–9, labelled as Part One in that chart. But Māgha goes beyond Bhāravi's model by extending the introductory descriptions through a second series of verses, this time bound together

Sequence A	Sequence B	Sequence C	
1.	2.	3.	**Part One** (Introduction) Verses tied together by apposition
4.	5.	6.	
7.	8.	9.	
10. Type B	11. Type A	12.	**Part Two** (Extension of Intro.) Verses tied together by relative clauses
13.	14.	15.	
16. Type B	17. Type A	18.	
19.	20.	21.	**Part Three** (Speech of the charioteer) Verses syntactically independent
22. Type B	23. Type A	24.	
25.	26.	27.	
28. Type B	29. Type A	30.	
31.	32.	33.	
34.	35.	36.	
37.	38.	39.	
40.	41.	42.	
43.	44.	45.	
46.	47.	48.	
49.	50.	51.	
52.	53.	54.	
55.	56.	57.	
58. Type B	59. Type A	60.	
61.	62.	63.	
64. Type B	65. Type A	66.	
67.	68.	(5. 1)	

Within each sequence, verses with relatively more complex ideas and imagery are shaded.

A verse in Sequence A whose overall nature is more typical of Sequence B is labelled "Type B," and vice versa.

TABLE 7.3: Major divisions in *sarga* 4 of the *Śiśupālavadha*

not by apposition but by relative clauses: verses 10–18, which I have called Part Two. This second method of binding verses together had been used earlier by Kālidāsa in his description of mountains at the beginning of one of his *mahākāvya*s, the *Kumārasaṃbhava*.

In this extension of the introductory section Māgha seems acutely aware of the danger that so lengthy a description of his topic may appear excessive, for he begins and ends Part Two with verses designed to justify the attention given to the mountain. As usual we will want to be open to the possibility that he is giving us information on his own understanding of what he is attempting here. Verse 10 gives a mythological justification:

mude murārer amaraiḥ sumeror
ānīya yasyôpacitasya śṛṅgaiḥ
bhavanti nôddāma-girāś kavīnām
ucchrāya-saundarya-guṇā mṛṣôdyāḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.10)

For the enjoyment of Kṛṣṇa it was put together
with peaks brought by the gods from Mount Meru.
The excellences of that mountain's loftiness and beauty
need not be described falsely by poets of unbridled expression.

And verse 17 refers to the mountain's inexhaustible novelty:

dṛṣṭo 'pi śailaḥ sa muhur murārer
apūrvavad vismayam ātatāna
kṣaṇe kṣaṇe yan navatām upaiti
tad eva rūpaś ramaṇīyatāyāḥ

For Kṛṣṇa, although he saw it repeatedly,
that mountain produced (each time) an astonishment
that seemed unprecedented. The essence of charm
is to become new at every moment.

The role of Kṛṣṇa in the phantasmagoria being set in motion here has already been touched on in the introduction to this paper. The rest we will return to after a closer look at Māgha's own approach to expression in this canto; for now I will remark only that in this, as in so much else, Māgha is once again building on something received from Bhāravi, who had presented a justification of his own at the corresponding point in his description of mountains.[45]

45. *Kirātārjunīya* 5.16: *anucareṇa dhanâdhipater atho naga-vilokana-vismita-mānasaḥ / sa jagade vacanaṃ priyam ādarān mukharatā 'vasare hi virājate*, "Then the servant of Kubera spoke, with close attention, a pleasing speech to (Arjuna,) whose mind was astonished by the sight of the mountain; for talkativeness is a beautiful thing when the occasion calls for it."

In pursuit of similar freshness in his poem, Māgha again follows Bhāravi by turning the description over to a character in the poem, in this instance Kṛṣṇa's charioteer Dāruka, who speaks throughout the rest of the canto. This device imparts some degree of liveliness simply by allowing the change from past tense to present tense, but more than this is required, and again Māgha takes his cues from Bhāravi. Just as Bhāravi had composed his opening section in a single meter, but had begun to vary the choice of meter at this point, so here also the meters are mixed for the remainder of the canto, the section that I have called Part Three. Māgha also borrows Bhāravi's idea of using *yamaka*, although here he goes beyond Bhāravi in employing the device from the beginning, rather than only in the final section of the canto.

While Māgha takes these devices from the example of Bhāravi, he uses them in a strikingly more elaborate and organized way. Whereas the changes in meter and the instances of *yamaka* in Bhāravi's canto are distributed in an apparently random fashion, in Māgha's canto they are arranged in a complex but regular pattern. Whereas for Bhāravi these devices serve largely to introduce variety, for Māgha they simultaneously carry out a scheme of structure as well. And in Māgha's scheme a further pattern of variation in the presentation of ideas is consistently coordinated with these patterns of verbal variation. It is this scheme of interlocking patterns that I hope to elucidate here.

Several of the essential elements in the overall scheme are pointed out by the commentator Mallinātha. In his comment on verse 3, the first verse in the canto in which the verbal ornament of *yamaka* appears, he tells us that *yamaka* will be used in every third verse throughout the canto. As I have mentioned, this sort of regularity is not present in Bhāravi's poem. For the *Śiśupālavadha* Mallinātha also explains that in each of these verses the *yamaka* itself will be the principal ornament in the verse, although from time to time the poet may manage to pull off an ornament of sense as well.[46] And in his remarks on verse 19, the beginning of Part Three of the canto, Mallinātha points out that from here on the choice of meter will vary, but that each of the verses following a verse in which *yamaka* is used will consistently be in the *vasantatilakā* meter.[47]

I have already outlined the effect of the phenomena noticed by Mallinātha, which is to divide the major portion of the canto into triads of verses, each triad beginning with a verse in *vasantatilakā* meter and ending with a verse using the verbal ornament *yamaka*. In the tables outlining the structure of the canto,

46. Mallinātha on *Śiśupālavadha* 4.3: *itaḥparaṃ dvy-antaram ekaṃ yamakaṃ vakṣyati. tatra tad evâlaṅkāraḥ. arthālaṅkāras tv abhyucceya iti yathā-saṃbhavam ūhyam.*

47. Mallinātha, *avataraṇikā* to *Śiśupālavadha* 4.19: *itaḥprabhṛti yamakânantara-ślokeṣu vasantatilakā-vṛttaṃ niyamenâha.*

I have labeled the *vasantatilakā* verses "Sequence A," the *yamaka* verses "Sequence C," and the intervening verses in each triad "Sequence B." I have extended these divisions outside Part Three to include the opening sections of the canto as well, because with the exception of changes in meter the characteristic features of the three sequences are noticeable from the beginning of the canto. And at the end I have filled out the final triad by including the first verse of the next canto, verse 5.1. Like the other verses in Sequence C, this is a *yamaka* verse. As it turns out, it is also a *vasantatilakā* verse; it serves to recapitulate the elements of the fourth canto in one last reference to the mountain, and so to conclude that description and form a transition to the next topic.

The major purpose of this division into triads is to provide the framework for a very regular pattern of ebb and flow in the intensity of ornaments of sound, carefully coordinated with opposing progressions in the intensity of ornaments of sense.

As we have already learned from Mallinātha, the final verse in each triad involves a maximal level of verbal ornamentation (called *śabdālaṅkāra* in Sanskrit literary theory) in the form of *yamaka*, together with the complete absence, in most instances, of any ideal trope or figure (*arthālaṅkāra*, "ornament of sense"). This combination is not surprising in itself, since the difficulty of composing *yamaka*s often precludes the achievement of anything very organized on the level of meaning.

At the other end of each triad the verses in *vasantatilakā* meter present the opposite combination. These verses usually have little or no ornamentation on the level of sound, and it is here that the poet, freed from the distractions of elaborate rhyme and unusual meter, brings out his heavy guns of imagery. The verses in this sequence characteristically involve such features as detailed conceits, extensive puns, or striking fancies.

Between these opposing extremes at either end of each triad, the verses in Sequence B are intermediate on the levels of both sound and sense. As verbal ornamentation these verses characteristically use *anuprāsa*, alliteration—considerably more noticeable than anything typically found in the verses of Sequence A, and much less arresting than the *yamaka* of the verses in Sequence C. Ornaments of sense are consistently present in Sequence B as opposed to their virtual absence in Sequence C, but are rarely as intense as those in Sequence A.

We have already seen one example of a triad from this canto, verses 4.19–21, illustrating these three sequences. The differences between the sequences can be made clearer by examining another typical series of verses from later on in the canto.

Verse 37 is a part of Sequence A, and accordingly it shows very little in the way of verbal ornamentation, but develops a very complicated figure of speech

in which each of the statements made in the verse can be applied both to the mantras held in the mind of a learned Brahmin and to the treasures concealed in the earth of the mountain:

vidvadbhir āgama-parair vivṛtaṃ kathaṃcic
chrutvâpi durgraham aniścita-dhībhir anyaiḥ
śreyān dvijātir iva hantum aghāni dakṣaṃ
gūḍhārtham eṣa nidhi-mantra-gaṇaṃ bibharti (*Śiśu.* 4.37)

Like an excellent Brahmin, this mountain holds a host of treasures that are like mantras [mantras that are like treasures]: they are efficacious in removing misfortunes [removing sins]; they are laboriously exposed to view by those who are experts and aim at acquiring wealth [are explained only with difficulty by learned men who study the treatises]; they are hard to get at for others whose notion (of their location) are uncertain, even when they have heard about them [are difficult to understand for others whose minds are not incisive, even when they have heard them]; and their wealth is hidden [their meaning is secret].

The next verse, verse 38, is a part of Sequence B. As verbal ornamentation it uses mild but noticeable alliteration and consonance. On the level of meaning it develops a conceit that is less intense than the ornamentation we have just seen, but nonetheless significant, and which turns on the difference between two related classes of mythological beings—the *aśvamukha*s, who are said to have the faces of horses and the bodies of humans, and the *kinnara*s, who are said to have the faces of humans and the bodies of horses:

bimbôṣṭhaṃ bahu manute turaṅga-vaktraṃ
cumbantaṃ mukham iha kinnaraṃ priyāyāḥ
śliṣyantaṃ muhur itaro 'pi taṃ nija-strīm
uttuṅga-stana-bhara-bhaṅga-bhīru-madhyām (*Śiśu.* 4.38)

The horse-faced creature envies the centaur, kissing
the mouth of his lover with its lip like a bimba fruit;
while he envies the other, embracing his own wife again and again,
her waist in danger of breaking from the burden of her high breasts.

Next, verse 39 is a part of Sequence C. It shows extensive *yamaka*: the whole of the second quarter of the verse is identical in its actual pronunciation with the whole of the fourth quarter. But on the level of sense its offering is quite meager:

yad etad asyânutaṭaṃ vibhāti
vanaṃ tatâneka-tamāla-tālam

na puṣpitâtra sthagitârka-raśmāv
ananta-tāne katamā latâlam (*Śiśu.* 4.39)

Since the slopes of this mountain are covered so beautifully
with many tamāla and palmyra trees,
what kind of vine has not blossomed here,
shielded from the rays of the sun, and with endless room?

In verse 40 we return to Sequence A, and again there is an elaborate production of comparisons and double meanings, with no striking verbal ornamentation:

dantôjjvalāsu vimalôpala-mekhalântāḥ
sad-ratna-citra-kaṭakāsu bṛhan-nitambāḥ
asmin bhajanti ghana-komala-gaṇḍa-śailā
nāryo 'nurūpam adhivāsam adhityakāsu (*Śiśu.* 4.40)

The women here are charming in their belts with faultless gems
[their midregions with spotless stones];
they have large hips and wide, smooth cheeks
[broad mountainsides and wide, smooth boulders]
they find a suitable home in the highlands
[find a locus of comparison in the highlands],
which have beautiful arbors, and slopes bright with fine jewels
[have beautiful teeth, and bracelets bright with fine jewels].

This is followed by verse 41, a part of Sequence B, and thus marked by clearly noticeable alliteration and by a gentler, but still considerable, ornament of sense:

anaticirôjjhitasya jaladena cira-
sthita-bahu-budbudasya payaso 'nukṛtim
virala-vikīrṇa-vajra-śakalā sakalām
iha vidadhāti dhauta-kaladhauta-mahī (*Śiśu.* 4.41)

These plains of bright silver,
with chunks of diamonds protruding here and there
look just like water recently dropped by the cloud,
still studded with lingering bubbles.

Finally, verse 42 belongs to Sequence C, and shows *yamaka* throughout the second half of each verse-quarter; it has less to offer on on the level of meaning:

varjayantyā janaiḥ ***saṅgam ekāntatas***
tarkayantyā sukhaṃ ***saṅgame kāntataḥ***
*yoṣayâiṣa smar**âsanna-tâpâṅgayā***
sevyate 'nekayā ***sannatâpâṅgayā*** (*Śiśu.* 4.42)

Many women come here in secret to be alone,
dreaming of being happy together with their lovers.
The corners of their eyes turn down,
and their bodies are filled with the fever of love.

In several instances these characteristic distinctions between the verses of Sequence A and those of Sequence B do not hold true, but these exceptions occur in a further pattern so perfectly symmetrical as to suggest that Māgha introduced them as deliberate variations, presumably because he felt that his grand scheme might itself become tedious to the reader if maintained with unrelieved consistency. Several verses in Sequence A do not achieve the intensity of ideas typical of the sequence, often because the verse is called upon to serve some narrative or expository function. When this happens the balance of the triad is endangered, and to preserve it the verses in Sequence B then take on the characteristics associated with Sequence A. In such a trade, the verse in Sequence A, which shows reduced intensity in its ideal ornamentation, will usually also show the alliteration typical of the verses in Sequence B; in Table 7.3 on page 174 I have marked such verses "Type B." And the following verse in Sequence B will then be lacking the expected alliteration, and will show unusual intensity in ideal ornamentation; I have marked such verses "Type A." Again the phenomenon may be made clearer by examples. The first full reversal of this kind in Part Three of the canto occurs in verses 22 and 23. Here verse 22 is a part of Sequence A, but in contrast to most of the verses in its sequence it uses the alliteration more typical of Sequence B, and presents a conceit that is fairly complicated but lacks the fuller intensity usually found in the verses of Sequence A:

pāścātya-bhāgam iha sānuṣu saṃniṣaṇṇāḥ
paśyanti śānta-mala-sândratarâṃśu-jālam
saṃpūrṇa-labdha-lalanā-lapanôpamānam
utsaṅga-saṅgi-hariṇasya mṛgâṅka-mūrteḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.22)

Those on its peaks see the other side of the moon,
which, since the dark spot is only on the front,
has a much greater density of brightness, and thus
looks all the more like the faces of beautiful women.

This is followed by verse 23, which departs from the typical characteristics of Sequence B by avoiding obvious alliteration beyond a touch of onomatopoeia, and by developing a rather complex conceit, which refers to the ritual suicide practiced by Śaiva ascetics at the cliffs of Girnār, and still commemorated today by plaques at the site:

kṛtvā puṃvat pātam uccair bhṛgubhyo
mūrdhni grāvṇāṃ jarjarā nirjharâughāḥ

kurvanti dyām utpatantaḥ smarârta-
svar-loka-strī-gātra-nirvāṇam atra (*Śiśu.* 4.23)

Here the currents of waterfalls, diving like men
from the high cliffs, shattering on the tops of the rocks,
fly up to heaven, bringing relief to the bodies
of heavenly women afflicted with love.

Here the conceit, as the commentator Mallinātha points out, rests on the fact that legal texts prescribe this sort of suicide as a path to heaven for aged hermits. The next such reversal in the canto occurs in verses 28 and 29. Verse 28, although a part of Sequence A, has strong alliteration and, once again, a conceit that is striking in itself but less intense than one might expect in this sequence:

uccair mahārajata-rāji-virājitâsau
durvarṇa-bhittir iha sāndra-sudhā-savarṇā
abhyeti bhasma-paripāṇḍ urita-smarârer
udvahni-locana-lalāma-lalāṭa-līlām (*Śiśu.* 4.28)

Here that wall of silver, the color of dense whitewash
brightened by a vein of gold, attains the beauty
of Śiva's forehead, whitened with ashes
and adorned by the eye with the rising flame.

Again this is followed by a verse in Sequence B, verse 29, that borrows the characteristics of Sequence A by avoiding alliteration and pursuing a comparison through the use of constant double meanings:

ayam atijaraṭhāḥ prakāma-gurvīr
alaghu-vilambi-payodharôparuddhāḥ
satatam asumatām agamya-rūpāḥ
pariṇata-dik-karikās taṭīr bibharti (*Śiśu.* 4.29)

This has slopes that are very solid and exceedingly massive
[very old and excessively obese];
it is covered with heavy, hanging clouds
[impeded by heavy, pendulous breasts];
always difficult of access for living beings
[always uninviting for lovemaking];
with elephants of the quarters stooping to strike with their tusks
[with marks of bites and nail wounds that have turned to scars].

Of course a judgement of the intensity of figuration in a verse is partially a subjective matter, and in marking a few verses (verses 17, 28, and 58) as deviations from the type of their sequences I have relied more on the presence or absence of obvious alliteration than on the degree of ideal ornamentation.

Similarly, I have marked one verse in Sequence B (verse 65) "Type A" because of its striking conceit, despite its use of alliteration. By my reckoning the sort of reversal between Sequence A and Sequence B that I have described occurs at the beginning and end of Part Two of the canto, and near the beginning and end of Part Three. Furthermore, at the extreme beginning and end of Part Three the verse in Sequence B shows "Type A" characteristics without a corresponding shift in Sequence A. The pattern of deviations is thus fully symmetrical within each major part of the canto.

The general scheme accomplished by this constant progression through three basic types of verses is further enriched by several patterns of alternation in Sequences B and C. The clearest of these involve the two major verbal devices of *yamaka* and change in meter. The more extensive form of *yamaka*, which I have called "*ardha-samudgaka yamaka*" in Table 7.4, is that in which the whole of the second quarter of the verse is identical in sound with the whole of the fourth quarter, as we saw in verse 39. This form occurs in every other verse of Sequence C in Part Three of the canto, alternating with less impressive forms of end rhyme (as we saw in verse 42) and with miscellaneous other forms of *yamaka*, the latter being included presumably because they are essentially the same forms of *yamaka* that Bhāravi managed to use in his canto. The details can be seen in the chart; again the pattern is remarkably symmetrical.

This pattern of alternation in the distribution of forms of *yamaka* coincides with an equally clear pattern in the distribution of meters in Sequence C, as listed in Table 7.5 on page 184. With only two exceptions, each of the verses using the major form of *yamaka* ("*ardha-samudgaka yamaka*") is composed in one of the nine most common meters in the *Śiśupālavadha*, that is, in a meter used by Māgha as a carrying meter throughout one or more cantos elsewhere in the poem. And, again with only two exceptions, each of the other *yamaka* verses is composed in a meter used in no other verse in the poem.

In Sequence B the pattern of meters is not as rigid. All but three of the verses are in meters used as carrying meters elsewhere in the poem, and the general pattern is one of alternating *puṣpitāgrā* and *praharṣiṇī*, which together account for over half the verses in this sequence in Part Three, but the details of the pattern are not entirely symmetrical.

What *is* symmetrical in Sequence B is the distribution of intensity in ornaments of sense. I have already explained the nature of the verses marked "Type A" in the charts; outside these variations the verses in Sequence B alternate in the intensity of their ideal ornaments, with every other verse—the verses that are shaded—showing a noticeably higher degree of elaboration in ornaments of sense.

The most important feature of this alternation in intensity in Sequence B is that it is coordinated with the alternation of intensity in the forms of *yamaka*

Sequence A (minimal)	**Sequence B** (moderate)	**Sequence C** (maximal)
1.	2.	3. *yamaka*
4.	5. *anuprāsa*	6. *yamaka*
7.	8.	9. *yamaka*
10. *anuprāsa*	11.	12. *yamaka*
13.	14.	15. *yamaka*
16. *anuprāsa*	17.	18. *yamaka*
19.	20.	21. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
22. *anuprāsa*	23.	24. *yamaka*
25.	26. *anuprāsa*	27. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
28. *anuprāsa*	29.	30. *yamaka*
31.	32. *anuprāsa*	33. *aty-ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
34.	35. *anuprāsa*	36. *yamaka*
37.	38. *anuprāsa*	39. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
40.	41. *anuprāsa*	42. *yamaka*
43.	44. *anuprāsa*	45. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
46.	47. *anuprāsa*	48. *yamaka*
49.	50. *anuprāsa*	51. *aty-ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
52.	53. *anuprāsa*	54. *yamaka*
55.	56. *anuprāsa*	57. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
58. *anuprāsa*	59.	60. *yamaka*
61.	62. *anuprāsa*	63. *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*
64. *anuprāsa*	65. *anuprāsa*	66. *yamaka*
67.	68. *anuprāsa*	(5.1) *yamaka*

Within each sequence, verses with relatively more complex imagery and ideas are shaded. In general terms *anuprāsa* is the repetition of one or more individual sounds and *yamaka* is the repetition of continuous series of sounds. In *ardha-samudgaka yamaka*, two entire quarters of the verse (here the second and fourth quarter) are identical in sound; in *aty-ardha-samudgaka yamaka* the identical portions are even more extensive.

TABLE 7.4: Obvious ornaments of sound in *sarga* 4 of the *Śiśupālavadha*

in Sequence C, and in fact is staggered relative to that alternation, so that the triads containing more intense levels of conceit in Sequence B tend to contain *less* intense levels of *yamaka* in Sequence C, and vice versa—a general principle of conservation of intensity that we have already seen at work in the triads in which a "Type A" verse in Sequence B is introduced to balance a "Type B" verse in Sequence A.

Sequence A	Sequence B	Sequence C
1. *upajāti*	2. *upajāti*	3. *upajāti*
4. *upajāti*	5. *upajāti*	6. *upajāti*
7. *upajāti*	8. *upajāti*	9. *upajāti*
10. *upajāti*	11. *upajāti*	12. *upajāti*
13. *upajāti*	14. *upajāti*	15. *upajāti*
16. *upajāti*	17. *upajāti*	18. *upajāti*
19. *vasantatilakā*	20. *puṣpitāgrā*	21. *drutavilambita*
22. *vasantatilakā*	23. *śālinī*	24. *pathyā**
25. *vasantatilakā*	26. *praharṣiṇī*	27. *upendravajrā*
28. *vasantatilakā*	29. *puṣpitāgrā*	30. *jaladharamālā**
31. *vasantatilakā*	32. *drutavilambita*	33. *vaṃśastha*
34. *vasantatilakā*	35. *upajāti*	36. *pramitākṣarā*
37. *vasantatilakā*	38. *praharṣiṇī*	39. *upendravajrā*
40. *vasantatilakā*	41. *kurarīrutā**	42. *sragviṇī**
43. *vasantatilakā*	44. *mattamayūra**	45. *dodhaka**
46. *vasantatilakā*	47. *mañjubhāṣiṇī*	48. *āryagīti**
49. *vasantatilakā*	50. *praharṣiṇī*	51. *āryagīti**
52. *vasantatilakā*	53. *praharṣiṇī*	54. *jaloddhatagati**
55. *vasantatilakā*	56. *puṣpitāgrā*	57. *rathoddhatā*
58. *vasantatilakā*	59. *praharṣiṇī*	60. *drutavilambita*
61. *vasantatilakā*	62. *bhramaravilasita**	63. *indravajrā*
64. *vasantatilakā*	65. *mālinī*	66. *pṛthvī*
67. *vaṃśapatrapatita**	68. *mālinī*	(5.1) *vasantatilakā*

Within each sequence, verses with relatively more complex imagery and ideas are shaded.

An asterisk marks meters not used elsewhere in the poem.

TABLE 7.5: Meters of the verses in *sarga* 4 of the *Śiśupālavadha*

It is as if Māgha were working with a quota of total intensity of all types to be met in each triad of verses.

Beyond their formal features, the three sequences of verses are also involved in the repetition of words and of ideas in the canto, which operate in an interesting way: linkages of topic or theme tend to run horizontally within the triads, while linkages involving the repetition of words tend to run vertically through the three sequences.

It is not uncommon for a verse in Sequence A to set a general tone or topic that persists in Sequence B. Verse 58, for example, sets a religious tone; as it happens the verse, although a member of Sequence A, is one of the "Type B" verses, so that we find a fairly restrained conceit together with obvious alliteration:

sāyaṃ śaśâṅka-kiraṇâhata-candrakānta-
nisyandi-nīra-nikareṇa kṛtâbhiṣekāḥ
arkopalôllasita-vahnibhir ahni taptās
tīvraṃ mahāvratam ivâtra caranti vaprāḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.58)

Here the slopes seem to perform a great *vrata*,
being bathed at night by the water
flowing from the moonstones struck by the moonbeams,
and heated by day by the fires flashing from the sunstones.

This conceit refers to the religious observance of exposing oneself to fires during the daytime and standing in cold water at night, and also depends upon the poetic convention that "sunstones" and "moonstones" give off fire and water, respectively, when struck by the rays of the celestial luminary after which they are named. This religious tone is carried on in verse 59, which as part of the trade in characteristics within this triad shows the detailed double meanings and lack of alliteration typical of "Type A" verses:

ekasminn adhika-payaḥ-śriyaṃ [adhi-kapayaḥ śriyaṃ] vahantyaḥ
saṃkṣobhaṃ pavana-bhuvā javena nītāḥ
vālmīker arahita-rāma-lakṣmaṇānāṃ
sādharmyaṃ dadhati girāṃ mahā-sarasyaḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.59)

On this (mountain) the large lakes, bearing a wealth of abundant water [or: dealing with monkeys and bearing beauty], and ruffled by the force produced by the wind [or: made heroic by the energy of Hanumān], sustain a resemblance to the words of Vālmīki [that is, the Rāmāyaṇa epic], in which Rāma and Lakṣ maṇa are together [or: on which there are cranes accompanied by their mates].

The next verse in Sequence A, verse 61, changes the tone to a sensual one, while displaying the typical characteristics of the sequence:

tvaksāra-randhra-paripūraṇa-labdha-gītir
asminn asau mṛdita-pakṣmala-rallakâṅgaḥ
kastūrikā-mṛga-vimarda-sugandhir eti
rāgîva saktim adhikāṃ viṣayṣu vāyuḥ (*Śiśu.* 4.61)

> On this (mountain) the wind, like a rakish man, becomes greatly attached to the regions [or: strongly addicted to sensual objects], obtaining song by blowing into the holes of the canes [or: of flutes], rubbing against the bodies of hairy *kambala* deer [or: against blankets], and being fragrant from contact with musk deer [or: with musk perfume].

Once again the following verse, verse 62, follows suit by dealing with a sensual theme, and has the typical features of verses in Sequence B:

> *prītyai yūnāṃ vyavahita-tapanāḥ*
> *prauḍha-dhvāntaṃ dinam iha jaladāḥ.*
> *doṣā-manyaṃ vidadhati surata-*
> *krīḍâyāsa-śrama-śama-paṭavaḥ* (*Śiśu.* 4.62)
>
> Here, to the joy of the young people, the clouds,
> which conceal the sun and are competent in quelling
> the fatigue caused by the exertions of lovemaking,
> make the day think itself night, because of the abundant darkness.

Despite such examples of general themes within some of the triads of verses, explicit repetition of individual words and of particular objects operates largely within the three sequences, rather than from verse to verse in the order in which they appear in the poem.

To begin with a few examples of the repetition of individual words:[48] four out of five verses in Sequence B, beginning with verse 50, use the word *vidadhati* as their finite verb, and four out of five verses in Sequence C in the same part of the poem use the verb *bibharti*. If such repetition had been used in verses occurring consecutively in the poem, it would have seemed inelegant, but when distributed by repeatedly appearing at intervals of three verses, these words form interlocking patterns in which the repetitions contribute to the general effect of ebb and flow. Instances of individual words repeated in one or two consecutive verses within a particular sequence, but not appearing in the surrounding verses in the other sequences, are far too frequent to be listed here.

The situation is similar where the repetition of the mention of particular objects is concerned. For example, seven of the eight verses mentioning bees occur in Sequence C, six of the seven verses mentioning the moon occur in Sequence A, six of the eight verses mentioning lotuses occur in Sequence C, and—to approach the statistics from another angle—none of the ten verses

48. The general phenomenon of the repetition of individual words within a single canto of a *mahākāvya* has been discussed in detail in Peterson 2003. Here again Bhāravi was the model for a technique put to more extreme use by Māgha.

mentioning gold occurs in Sequence B. In the face of such statistics it is tempting to suppose that Māgha must have composed each of the three sequences separately, and then interlaced them to form his canto. At any rate it is clear from the scheme of formal variations that Māgha held the characteristic features and alternations of each sequence in mind throughout the canto.

The end result is a canto that, faced with the lack of any obvious basis for ordering in its subject matter, instead had imposed upon its descriptions an arbitrary but elaborate structure of formal patterns, by a poet who characteristically (or, some might say, compulsively) sought to excel his predecessors by employing the techniques he received from them in complex designs of organization.

Still the question remains of why this extravaganza should have been unleashed here and not elsewhere in the poem. And not just by Māgha but also by Bhāravi before him and by Ratnākara and Śrīharṣa and others after him—what is it, if indeed it is anything more than tradition, about mountains that calls for this flashy treatment? Others have tried to answer similar questions,[49] and I have already given a part of my own answer: what Magha had to deal with was a lengthy and an apparently random description of a single natural item, with no persistent human activity in the forefront of his description, which is what separates this canto from the others. At the same time, the object of his description is one which is visually spectacular. The Sanskrit word that springs to mind is *citra*: the mountain as Māgha describes it is glittering, shining, filled with treasures. This canto has more words referring to rays of light, in greater density, than any other portion of the poem. It deals with descriptions of gold, of silver, of sunlight—rays of light are bouncing through the confines of nearly every verse.

Recall now Māgha's verses of justification early in the canto, at the beginning and end of the second introductory section, in which he explained why such a long description was appropriate, and particularly the way this justification concludes: "the essence of charm is to become new at every moment," a maxim that is one of the most quoted lines in Sanskrit, and which is cited with approval by Ānandavardhana himself. Magha, here following in Bhāravi's footsteps, sees himself as dealing with a subject of novelty and of glitter, and he uses *citra* for *citra*. It is not a canto that is completely devoid of *rasa*, but the *rasa* that is being evoked is *adbhuta*, the mood of astonishment.

In Sanskrit theory *adbhuta rasa* is unlike most other rasas—such as *śṛṅgāra rasa*, the erotic mood, or *karuṇa rasa*, the compassionate mood, both of which have been mentioned as inappropriate settings for the use of particularly flashy devices—because, along with a few others such as the comic *rasa*, it does not in

49. See Smith 1985, 135–37 for a discussion of this in connection with Ratnākara.

practice require the depiction of persons in interaction. To have the evocation of the erotic mood you have to present characters who are in love with each other, and to have the evocation of the compassionate *rasa* you have to present a character who is feeling grief. But to have the miraculous *rasa* all you need is to present something miraculous, although it helps if you have someone to present it to, which is why the charioteer is introduced here, speaking to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is being astonished by the things which are presented to him, a point emphasized in both of the apologetic verses in this canto, and in fact an idea that is present in the poem from its very first verse, and repeatedly referred to in other cantos as well.

In short, the situation here is that there are no persons that can be used, there are no human activities that can be depicted in any ongoing way; the only thing that he can describe is something astonishing, something glittering, something ever new, something full of light, something striking, something spectacular. And if he does that in furtherance of the *adbhuta rasa*, then he can use *yamaka* in the way that Ānandavardhana said that *yamaka* could be used, in support of a *rasa*, provided that it is not one of the sensitive *rasa*s.

So I would say that the challenge of a canto devoid of human interaction is the first reason why *yamaka*s are used here. And the second reason is that, beyond this, the *yamaka* and the other forms of spectacular sound play produce a sort of verbal echo of the spectacular light show that the poet is fixated on in describing the mountain in the fourth canto, and so in that way as well the use of *citra* poetry is particularly appropriate. But a third consideration, and one that Māgha is careful to emphasize in his explanatory verses, is that the scene must always be ever new. There must be constant variety, which is what makes things beautiful. It is for this reason, I imagine, that the *yamaka*s are not presented one after another without a break, but included in this complicated pattern of ebb and flow, itself varied at intervals by shifts in the scheme, so as to maintain the sense of surprise and variety throughout the canto, in a kind of pulsating flow of energy that corresponds also to undulating rhythms in the types of effort required to compose and to receive the verses.

One might wonder why Kālidāsa, who describes a mountain range at the beginning of his *Kumārasambhava*, did not use the same technique. I think the answer follows from what I have already said about the role of persons. In the opening of the *Kumārasambhava* Kālidāsa deals with the mountain not simply as a mountain, but as a living character, and that particular mountain, Himālaya, is not only a living character, but the father of the hero of the poem. The opening description thus falls in the category of describing the family of the hero rather than simply of describing one of the items in a list of topoi, even aside from the fact that the movement in the direction of descriptive cantos that is apparent in

Bhāravi and Māgha is a change that comes about after Kālidāsa. Even so I think the memory of Kālidāsa's description of Himālaya was probably part of what contributed to the overall notion of a mountain scene as involving a montage of visual effects, since the opening of the *Kumārasambhava* is certainly not lacking in light, as Ingalls has noticed in describing its images as including "ice and snow, the scintillation of the close sunlight, the peacock feathers of the mountaineers, the jewelry of the nymphs, the incarnadined masses of clouds."[50]

A final thing to note about the treatment of the mountain is that even in the *yamaka*s here Māgha is not operating at maximum flashiness, but is somewhere in the midrange of what he is capable of in special effects. Just as within each triad in this canto there is a sort of conservation of effort at work, a mixture of forces of the kind that Renou has referred to as the "harmony of volume" that the *kāvya* poets aim at, in the same way the range of spectacular poetry represented by the *yamaka*s used here is intermediate between the kinds of *citra* used in other cantos. We will see a gentler variety of *yamaka* in the more erotic treatment of the seasons, and a more tumultuous kind in the pounding descriptions of the violence of war.

D.2. The Birds and the Bees: Māgha's Seasons

SUMMARY OF WORK IN PROGRESS: The bulk of *sarga* 6, which describes the seasons, is composed, like Kālidāsa's description of the spring festival in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, in *drutavilambita* meter with regular *yamaka*s in the fourth quarter of each verse. All six seasons are described in succession; this is yet another idea taken from Bhāravi, although Bhāravi himself had covered the seasons in only a small part of one canto and had not used *yamaka*s in doing so. Towards the end of the canto, Māgha shifts into overdrive and describes all six seasons over again, using a variety of meters and a fancier level of *yamaka* repetitions.

Māgha tells us what he is up to, first with a verse at the beginning explaining that the seasons decided to put on a show for the entertainment and pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, who was pausing on his journey, and then with a verse at the very end explaining that the method employed in this show was to present a display of all the seasons involving the interplay of flowers, songs, and bees—which is accurate, provided that "bee" is taken to mean by extension "the birds and the bees."

The general techniques are those already seen in Kālidāsa, except that Māgha is not progressing toward any narrative end. Instead he organizes the canto,

50. Ingalls 1955, 34.

which otherwise moves ahead in a monolinear line like Kālidāsa's, through the interaction of two uncharacteristically nonrigid schemes. One is the obvious one of the round of the seasons; here the seasons are given varying lengths of airtime, in proportion to their pleasantness. The other is a series of thematic focuses, in some of which he is careful to cover all the five (or six) senses within a series of related verses.

Māgha supports the emphasis applied in the *yamaka* repetitions through a metrical device similar to the one noted in Kālidāsa: in his *drutavilambita* verses in this canto, Māgha increases the prominence of the *yamaka* slot by aligning word-breaks with the juncture between the two triads of sounds, using a technique we have already seen in Kālidāsa.[51] Māgha's use of the technique, however, differs from that of Kālidāsa in being even more stringent in the treatment of the *yamaka* quarters, and in applying the contrasting slurring over of that juncture in the non-*yamaka* quarters with increasing frequency as one moves away from the *yamaka* quarter rather than toward it.[52]

D.3. The Tumult of Battle: Māgha's Citrasarga

SUMMARY OF WORK IN PROGRESS: Māgha's dependence on Bhāravi's model for the selection of *citra* devices is particularly striking, and is summarized in Table 7.6 on page 191. *Sarga* 19 describes the ongoing battle between Kṛṣṇa's army and that of Śiśupāla, beginning with the encounters between individual heroes. The canto is arranged in pairs of verses, in each of which the second verse is a relatively simple *śleṣa* verse, in which no resegmentation of words is necessary to arrive at the second meaning; usually it is simply a comparison in which the qualifiers can apply to both the subject and the object of comparison. The first verse in each pair is a *citra* verse, drawing on all of the categories described earlier, and including counterparts or enhancements to each of the special *citra* items that Bhāravi had used, as laid out in Table 7.6. The other verses in the slot are usually difficult *yamaka* verses in the earlier part of the canto, but as the action progresses and the battle heats up these are increasingly replaced by the even more difficult *dvyakṣara* verses.

51. See n. 34 on p. 36.

52. For the non-*yamaka* quarters a word crosses the division between the triads in 36 of 66 verses for *pāda* a, 35 of 66 verses for *pāda* b, and 25 of 66 verses for *pāda* c. In the *yamaka* quarters there are six instances of such crossovers (verses 12, 28, 29, 44, 51, and 66), but each of these occurs in a *pāda* in which the poet goes on to further repetitions in the same *pāda*; there are no such crossovers in verse-quarters with simple *yamaka*s of the type to which Kālidāsa confines himself.

Kirātārjunīya, Sarga 15

1. **yamaka**
3. **yamaka**
5. niyama: ekākṣarapāda
7. niyama: nirauṣṭhya
8. **yamaka**
10. **yamaka**
12. bandha: gomūtrikābandha
14. niyama: ekavyañjana
16. **yamaka** : samudga (ab = cd)
18. **reverse yamaka** : a ↔ b, c ↔ d
20. **reverse yamaka** : a ↔ b, c ↔ d
22+23. **reverse yamaka** : abcd ↔
25. bandha: sarvatobhadra
27. bandha: ardhabhramaka
29. niyama: nirauṣṭhya
31. **yamaka**
35. **yamaka** : b = d
37. **yamaka**
38. niyama: dvyakṣara
42. **yamaka**
43. citra: gūḍhacaturtha
45. citra: arthatrayavācī
50. **yamaka** : samudga (ab = cd)
52. **yamaka** : a = b = c = d

Śiśupālavadha, Sarga 19

1. **yamaka**
3. niyama: ekākṣarapāda
5. **yamaka** : b = d
7. **yamaka** : b = d
9. **yamaka** : b = d
11. niyama: nirauṣṭhya
13. **yamaka**
15. **yamaka** : b = d
17. **yamaka** : b = d
19. **yamaka** : b = d
21. **yamaka** : b = d
23. **yamaka**
25. **yamaka** : b = d
27. bandha: sarvatobhadra
29. bandha: murajabandha
31. **yamaka** : b = d
33+34. **reverse yamaka** : abcd ↔ abcd

(*Śiśupālavadha*, Sarga 19, cont.:)

36. **yamaka**
38. **yamaka** : b = d
40. **reverse yamaka** : in a, b, c, d
42. **yamaka** : b = d
44. **reverse yamaka** : a ↔ b, c ↔ d
46. bandha: gomūtrikābandha
48. **yamaka** : b = d
50. **yamaka** : b = d
52. **yamaka** : b = d
54. **yamaka** : b = d
56. **yamaka** : b = d
58. **yamaka** : samudga (ab = cd)
60. **yamaka** : a = c
62. **yamaka**
64. **yamaka** : b = d
66. niyama: dvyakṣara
68. niyama: asaṃyoga
70. **yamaka**
72. bandha: ardhabhramaka
74. **yamaka** : b = d
76. **yamaka** : b = d
78. **yamaka** : b = d
80. **yamaka** : b = d
82. **yamaka** : b = d
84. niyama: dvyakṣara
86. niyama: dvyakṣara
88. **reverse yamaka** : ab ↔ cd
90. **reverse equiv. yamaka** : a ⇔ b, c ⇔ d
92. **yamaka**
94. niyama: dvyakṣara
96. citra: gūḍhacaturtha
98. niyama: dvyakṣara
100. niyama: dvyakṣara
102. niyama: dvyakṣara
104. niyama: dvyakṣara
106. niyama: dvyakṣara
108. niyama: dvyakṣara
110. niyama: atālavya
112. **yamaka**
114. niyama: ekākṣara
116. citra: arthatrayavācī
118. **yamaka** : samudga (a = b, c = d)
120. bandha: cakrabandha

Details of *yamakas* are mentioned only where at least a full continuous *pāda* is repeated.

TABLE 7.6: The *citrasargas* of Bhāravi and Māgha

As the table also suggests, it would appear that Māgha, despite his vastly greater enthusiasm for *yamaka*s as compared to Bhāravi (thirty-five of them in the *citrasarga* versus eleven in Bhāravi's), did not have a correspondingly greater interest in *citrabandha*s.

The two verses in each pair often, but not always, describe the same general object, to a greater degree than would have resulted simply from the overall progression in topics of description.

The *yamaka* verses often deliver non-trivial examinations of identities of the sort described earlier. An good example is this description of Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma:

*rāme ripuḥ śarān āji-**maheṣv āsa vicakṣaṇe***
*kopād athâinaṃ śitayā **maheṣvā sa vicakṣaṇe***

The enemy shot arrows at Rāma,
who was skillful in the festivals of war;
then out of anger (Rāma) killed him
with a large sharp arrow.

Here Rāma's effectiveness as a warrior, which is referred to in its potential form through an adjective in the first utterance (*vicakṣaṇe*, "skillful"), becomes cleverly actualized as the same sounds turn into a verb in the repetition (*vicakṣaṇe*, "killed").

Māgha once again includes a verse telling us of his indications, if we add "and vice versa" to his statement in verse 41 that the formations on the battlefield were like the *bandha*s of *citrakāvya* in their difficulty:

viṣamaṃ sarvatobhadra-cakra-gomūtrikādibhiḥ
ślokair iva mahākāvyaṃ vyūhais tad abhavad balam (*Śiśu.* 9.41)

Like a *mahākavya* with its verses,
that army was impassible/difficult with its formations:
the omnivalent, the circle, the zigzag,
and others of the sort.

It seems reasonable to take the use of *citra* devices in this canto as duplicating or enacting in some way the confusion and use of force on the battlefield.

The difficulties of some of the verses raise special questions concerning the mode of reception of such poetry.

E. Conclusion

Much remains to be done, not only in examining the further the inner workings of the sixth and nineteenth cantos, but also in investigating in a more general

way the uses to which *yamaka*s can be put and the ways in which those uses might differ from those of *śleṣa*.

It is already evident, however, that Māgha uses *yamaka*s in a variety of ways that involve patterns reaching across extended series of verses, that he uses different kinds of *yamaka* and different patterns of *yamaka* in different settings, and that in all of this he both follows old traditions and adds new levels of intensity and complexity.

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8

A Constant Flow of Pilgrims

Kāvya *and the Early History of the* Kakawin

Thomas M. Hunter

A. Introduction

There could be few more convincing proofs of the vitality of the *kāvya* and its ability to respond to changing expressive needs than the evidence of its profound influence on the development of the Javano-Balinese *kakawin*, court epics written in Indian meters and a form of the Javanese language known to scholars as Old Javanese (OJ), and known in modern Bali as Kawi, "the language of poets." The *kakawin* tradition began during the Early Mataram period (c. 732–928 CE), when artistic creativity often took an anonymous, cooperative form, passed through a stage of consolidation and high achievement during the ascendancy of the East Javanese dynasties (c. 929–1527 CE), and continued to be actively produced well into the nineteenth century in Bali, where study and occasional composition in kakawin form continues even today.

While there is still some debate on the dating of the earliest work in *kakawin* form, many scholars accept the claim that the *kakawin* burst on the historical scene with the metrical inscription of 856 CE and the nearly contemporaneous composition of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, or "Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa*" (hereafter: OJR). Worsley (2009) has recently produced a useful review of the cultural setting of these two events with his work on the "cosmopolitan vernacular culture" of ancient Java during the Early Mataram period in central Java. Following Pollock (1996, 1998), Worsley views the translocal cultural formation of the late first millennium CE as the basis for the

production of the reliefs of the Rāma story at the great temple complex known as Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang, or Prambanan. In the same article he reviews the relationship of the reliefs of Prambanan with literary works like the OJR, the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama*, and three works from the South Asian tradition that may have influenced the reliefs in various ways—the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* of Bhaṭṭi, and the *Jānakī-haraṇa* of Kumāradāsa.[1]

For our purposes the most prominent of the South Asian works that may have affected the narrative reliefs of Prambanan is the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (BK), for this work has been shown by Hooykaas (1957) to have directly inspired at least the first 16 of the 26 *sarga*s of the OJR, and so has much to tell us about the processes of transmission and adaptation that lie behind the production of the OJR. It has often been remarked that the BK is a strange work to have been chosen as the model for a Javanese version of the story of Rāma, since its main purpose was to serve as a textbook on Pāṇinian grammar; it was only secondarily intended as a work that fulfills the technical and aesthetic requirements of a *mahākāvya*. However, as should become clear in this chapter, the BK may have had a special appeal for the poets and pedagogues of ancient Java: as a compendia of *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra*—figures of sound and sense—the BK must have been an indispensable tool in the development of a repertoire of figures within the ancient Javanese tradition of *kakawin* composition.

Worsley's positioning of the production of the reliefs at Prambanan and the composition of the OJR within a translocal context is well worth considering at some length, for he brings out very clearly the role these works played in the aestheticization of the political sphere. Pollock (1996, 1998) has remarked that as polities came into being as regional geopolitical formations they began to rewrite the broader cosmopolitan forms of the "Sanskrit cosmopolis" in local terms. Worsley speaks of the case of Java thus:

> [...] by allegorizing the image of political space in the Sanskrit epics, vernacular poets also imagined a new kind of political space in their narratives, one which was commensurate with the actual political space of their own daily lives and in which their works circulated [...] [There] is good reason to believe that ancient Java participated in the [...] cultural transformations that Pollock has described. In particular the three practices which Pollock associates with the rise of cosmopolitan vernaculars—the creation of literary vernaculars in the image of Sanskrit, literary vernaculars used for public political eulogy and the mapping through allegory of Sanskrit epic political space on vernacular

1. See Stutterheim 1989, on the relationship of the *Hikayat Seri Rama*, and a more general field of oral literature and performance forms, to the reliefs at Prambanan.

> political spaces—were all characteristic of ancient Javanese vernacular culture from the ninth century. (Worsley 2009)

Adopting two terms from Braginsky's work (1993) on the typology of pre-modern Malay literature, I have argued elsewhere (Hunter 2002, 2009b) that the Early Mataram can be understood as a historical period marked by the shift from a "connecting literature" that tied the pedagogical institutions of the ancient archipelago to sources of Indian Buddhism by way of the Mahāyāna canon, to a self-conscious literature in Old Javanese that attained the status of a "zone-shaping literature" in its own right. I have further argued that this shift was accompanied both by the development of specialized literary languages (Old Malay, Old Javanese, Old Balinese) that served the needs of an emergent translocal elites, and by the incorporation of Indian "forms of the commentary" into the techniques of translation and text-building that are a special mark of the ancient Javanese didactic and narrative traditions (Hunter 2010).

In this work I suggest that we need to begin to understand the processes by which a figural repertoire was developed in Old Javanese in translocal terms, and begin to accept the possibility that the composition of works like the OJR may have been no less a cooperative effort than the design and execution of the reliefs of Prambanan or Borobuḍur. This calls us to follow the precedent of Pollock (2003), that is, to begin to write the history of OJ literature "from the inside out." This means paying close attention to metapoetic, autobiographical, and descriptive passages in literary works that can provide glimpses into the socio-cultural and historical contexts of literary activity, but we also need careful, comparative reading of works like the BK and OJR that have a proven relationship of "model" and "copy." Bearing in mind the inherent limits of those terms, by understanding what happens in the process of moving from one literary idiom to another we may still be able catch of the creative and innovative moments when South Asian figures took on a new life in the hands of the poets of ancient Java.

B. The Historical Setting

> *satata-gurjara-deśa-samāgatais [sic] sugata-bhakti-bhara-praṇatai(s) [...] kriyate jina-mandiram /*
>
> This temple of the Buddha has been constructed by the constant stream [of pilgrims] coming from the Gurjara country who bow low to the Buddha from the weight of their devotion [...] (inscription of Caṇḍi Plaosan, c. 9th century CE)[2]

2. See Sarkar 1971, 48, viii–xi, for a transliteration of the inscription of Caṇḍi Plaosan.

The influence of *kāvya* on the development of a unique Javano-Balinese literary form, and the emergence of the Old Javanese language as a "cosmopolitan vernacular," coincide with a remarkable period of efflorescence in the material culture of the ancient Malay-Indonesian archipelago, especially in the fertile rice plains of central and east Java and the river basins of eastern Sumatra. As Bronson (1977: 39–54) and Hall (1985: 13–20) have shown, two distinct forms of socio-economic organization developed around these two geophysical zones. The maritime empire of Śrīwijaya, which dominated the east-west trade of the Malay straits c. 670–1025 CE, exemplifies a "riverine exchange network."[3] Polities that developed around riverine exchange were based on control of the sea lanes, but just as important were alliances with upriver villages that provided valuable forest products for overseas trade, as well as surplus in grain production necessary to support trading communities at the mouths of rivers like the Batang Hari and Musi of central and south-eastern Sumatra.

Another type of polity developed around the "rice-plain networks" typical of central and eastern Java. The potential of these networks to supply a surplus in food production, bulk goods, and handicrafts led to the early development of a unique form of market organization based on a rotating five-day market week that allowed producers to maximize their income through access to a series of markets, each within walking distance of their agricultural hamlet (*wanua*) and falling on successive days of the five-day week. These local markets (*pěkěn*) fed into regional market centers whose traders and middlemen traded with the merchants (*banyaga*) of higher-order markets, often aligned with ritual and political centers, which provided access to a thriving international trade based on the exchange of rice, salt, spices, and the *materia medica* of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago for fine textiles, porcelain, and other luxury items flowing out from coastal ports of China, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf.

The history of this period has often been related in terms of the political fortunes of the Śailendra and Sañjaya dynasties that dominate the epigraphic record. However, more fine-tuned studies of the many inscriptions recording the granting of tax-free lands (*sīma*) dedicated to the upkeep of religious institutions reveal a more complex structure of alliances.[4]

Supralocal leaders called *rakryān* appear to have developed naturally out of the need for higher-level coordination of territorial units of wet-rice irrigation (*watěk*). Some of these *rakryān* were able to muster sufficient political and

3. See Jordaan and Colless 2006, 2009, for recent challenges to the view that Śrīwijaya dominated the archipelago until 1025 CE; they suggest instead a shift in power to Kedah.

4. See *inter alia* Christie 1986, 1991, 2001; de Casparis 1986; and Hall 1985, 1992, for studies on the nature of *rakryān*-based polities in the political structure of the Early Mataram.

economic resources to enable the establishment of a court center (*kaḍatwan, kraton*) and to claim the right to a share of ritual income and ritual labour (*drĕwya haji, buat haji*) that may originally have been due to deities at water sources in the high mountains.[5] In time, some of these *rakryān* were able to claim the status of *mahārāja*, to extend their alliance and patronage networks beyond their original territorial bases, and to participate in international trade that reached south, central Java via a system of highways connecting the Kedu plain to ports on the central north coast.[6]

While conventional political considerations may have played a role in the Early Mataram, for our purposes the crucial factor in the practice of ancient Javanese statecraft was the accumulation and distribution of cultural capital. For this is the domain in which the literary arts, alongside the performing, visual, and architectural arts, played a special role, projecting a vision of spiritual and political unity whose most perfect embodiment was a "Sanskritized" elite with access to both the material and intellectual assets of a translocal cultural formation.

Studies of the inscriptional and architectural record have shown us that two closely interlinked dynasties emerged as paramount centers of political and economic power in the Early Mataram. These were the Sañjaya, a Javanese Śaivite dynasty who first appear on the historical scene with the Canggal inscription of 732 CE, and the Śailendra, whose origins are less clear, but appear to have closely allied with the maritime empire Śrīwijaya, with whom they shared an allegiance to Mahāyāna Buddhism. This alliance may have allowed the Śailendra to gain a major share of the international trade well before the Sañjaya and other regional leaders entered into competition for international sources of economic power, for their records dominate the inscriptions of central Java in the eight century and the first quarter of the ninth century. Woodward's (1977) discussion of a Chinese silk cloth illustrated among the statuary of Caṇḍi Sewu, a Śailendra temple of c. 792 CE, is instructive here, for it suggests that the Śailendra took a direct interest in the distribution of the luxury goods of the international maritime networks, and were fully aware of the symbolic capital that was a natural consequence of the expression of religious imagery by means of sophisticated and carefully fashioned items of material culture.

5. I differ from van Naerssen 1976, 296–322, and Hall 1985, 118–19, in viewing the rise of the power of the *rakryān* as based on precedence in the ritual domain rather than an exchange of labour and capital in return for capable rule. For the term "precedence" and its use in the study of Austronesian societies of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago see Fox 1994 and Reuter 2003.

6. See Christie 2001 for a discussion of the Balingawan charter of 891 CE (Sarkar 1971, lvi, lvii). As Christie tells us, this charter was designed to open up rice lands along the main route to the north by way of present-day Magelang, with the "stated reason being the need to reduce the danger presented to travellers by the swidden fields along the roads" (2001, 9).

Another crucial factor to be considered here is the existence of crosscutting patterns of religious patronage. Hall (1985) has shown that the incorporation of lands formerly on the periphery of the area controlled by a rakryān often took the form of the dedication of a new temple in an elaborate ceremony marked by substantial gift-exchanges that may have had the effect of limiting the economic resources of potential competitors for the prestige of a rakryān who had achieved supraterritorial powers. Most important for our purposes is the fact that these dedications could cut across religious lines. The Kalasan inscription of 700 Śaka (778 CE), for example, records the donation of an "abode of Tārā" and adjoining monastery by one Paṇaṅkaraṇa, who is believed to have been among the indigenous rakryān whose "majority religion" was Śaivism. Another set of inscriptions from the first quarter of the ninth century tell us that one rakarayān Patapan Pu Palar and his wife were involved, on the one hand, in the dedication of an image of the god Indra to a Buddhist shrine of the Śailendra monarch Samaratuṅga, and on the other hand, in a Śaivite ceremony marking the dedication of an image at the complex of Wintang Mas.

C. The Glories of Temple Architecture and the Metrical Inscription of 856 CE

The dynamic events that de Casparis has described for the mid-ninth century have a particular relevance for literary history: just at the point where Rakai Pikatan emerges as victorious in what appears to have been a struggle for supremacy on the Kedu plain, we also find that something new and innovative appears in the arts. If we accept the major points of the arguments of de Casparis (1956) and Aichele (1969), then the construction of the temple complex at Prambanan, the metrical inscription of 856 CE, and the composition of the OJR can all be linked to the expressive needs of the Sañjaya dynasty as they sought to both emulate and surpass the achievements of the Śailendra.

Given its importance for our understanding of these three events it is worth briefly reviewing what we know of the inscription in *kakawin* form of 856 CE. Numbered D20 in the collection of the National Museum in Jakarta, this inscription is a bilingual inscription in stone. Unfortunately the Sanskrit portion of the inscription is no longer legible, but the OJ section has been the source of very valuable information on the political structure of the mid-ninth century, which has been further enhanced by the more recent discovery of the Karang Tengah III inscription of 908 CE and the Mantyasih inscription of 907 CE, both issued by Balitung, a direct descendant of the rulers featured in the inscription of 856 CE. For our study the main points of interest are that the

inscription was commissioned by Rakai Pu Kayuwangi Dyah Lokapāla on the occasion of the dedication of an image of Śiva at a great Śaiva complex (*Śivagrha, Śivālaya*) whose construction had originally been undertaken by his predecessor, Rakai Pikatan Pu Khumbayoni. From the Karang Tengah III inscription we know that Rakai Pikatan passed away in 855 CE, and indeed the inscription of 856 CE refers to Rakai Kayuwangi's concern for the preparation of his postmortem rites.

It is also of interest that the Śivagrha inscription of 856 CE speaks of the shame felt by Rakai Kayuwangi and his officials at the sufferings of the village of Iwung in a recent conflict. De Casparis has concluded that this refers to a struggle between the Sañjaya and Śailendra that led to the "retreat" of the Śailendra prince Balaputra to Śrīwijaya and his subsequent role as the ruler of Śrīwijaya. de Casparis' reasoning rests on the assumption that a Śailendra prince named Balaputra mentioned in several ninth century inscriptions of central Java is the same person who later appears as the Śrīwijayan monarch who donated a "rest-house for pilgrims from Śrīwijaya" at Nālanda, the great Buddhist centre of learning on the eastern Gangetic plain.[7] While it may eventually be shown that there need to be revisions to the generally held view that there was a "Śailendra retreat" to Sumatra in the mid-ninth century, de Casparis' reasoning has the virtue of responding to what appears to have been a history of political struggle reflected in the Śivagrha inscription, and the concomitant glorification of the reigning monarch from the line of Sañjaya.

Rakai Pikatan's reputation as a "universal monarch" who struggled for the unification of the realm during the first half of the ninth century lived on in the inscriptional record, and is moreover commonly associated with the construction of Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrong at Prambanan, at least partly on the basis of the metrical inscription of 856 CE. Many scholars also accept the proposition that the great Śaivite complex at Prambanan represents a Sañjaya response to the glories of Caṇḍi Borobuḍur. Beyond the similarities in terms of the immensity of the two monuments, there are also details that seem to represent more than a fortuitous relationship between their narrative reliefs. One episode at Borobuḍur from the reliefs illustrating the *Lalitavistara*, for example, shows the Bodhisattva shooting an arrow through seven *tāl* trees.[8] This relief is almost exactly mirrored in a similar scene from the reliefs of the central shrine to Śiva at Prambanan illustrating the Rāma story, even though this scene does not figure prominently in

7. See Sircar 1983, 71–9 for the text of the Nālanda copperplate of Devapāla (reigned c. 812–850 CE). The details of the grant of Devapāla for the upkeep of the 'monastery' (*vihāra*) founded at Nālanda by Balaputra of Suvarṇadvīpa begins in verse 37 of the inscription.

8. For an illustration of this scene at Borobuḍur see Plate XXV.49 in van Erp and Krom 1920, Reliefs, Volume II. For the closely related scene at Prambanan see Stutterheim 1989, Figure 45, plates XVIIa-d.

textual sources for the Rāma story known to have been studied in the archipelago, nor in later performance traditions around the story of Rāma.

In these two monuments, one noted for its *maṇḍala*-like 'mapping' of the conceptual worlds of late Mahāyāna Buddhism, the other for the *liṅga*-like thrust of its towering spires, we find again a meeting point between the Sañjaya and the Śailendra. For Borobuḍur, whose construction extended from c. 760–850 CE, is believed to have been completed under Sañjaya patronage, despite being initiated by the Śailendra and representing an exposition of several major texts of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school of the Mahāyāna that enjoyed the special attention of the preceptors of the Śailendra patrons. The complex at Prambanan, on the other hand, was a product of the Sañjaya alone, and appears to represent the assertion of the Śaivite ideals of the Sañjaya. While its narrative reliefs do not begin to equal the extraordinary length of those at Borobuḍur, the adoption of the story of Rāma for the reliefs of Prambanan has been handled with a grace of presentation that is everywhere the equal of the best narrative relief work of Borobuḍur. Adding to this the impressive effects of the six main temple spires of Prambanan, and a host of smaller shrines whose outlines repeat and add weight and variety to the grandeur of the central shrines, one can only arrive at the conclusion that the Sañjaya were able, in their own time, to produce an aesthetic realization of their ideals that was in every way the equal of the profundity of Borobuḍur. It may be no accident, then, that the OJR was produced under their patronage: while the reliefs of Borobuḍur demonstrated Śailendra mastery of the textual canon of the Mahāyāna and emphasized the identification of Śailendra rulers with the ideal of the Bodhisattva, the Sañjaya were able to produce their own literary canon that projected another set of monarchical ideals embodied in the story of Rāma.

D. The Prehistory of the *Kakawin*

We have stressed the close relationship of the Sañjaya and Śailendra dynasties in ninth-century Java, and the crosscutting patterns of religious patronage that supported the founding of numerous temple sites and centers of religious study in the Early Mataram in order to lay the groundwork for a claim that the composition of the OJR can best be understood in the context of a pattern of religious interaction that cut across political loyalties and ties of kinship and ensured a very porous boundary between the pedagogical methods and curricula of Hindu and Buddhist religious institutions.

While an earlier generation of scholars has made notable advances in our understanding of several aspects of the OJR that make it unique in the

history of the *kakawin*, the tendency to view the work as the unitary achievement of a single author, which at some point was expanded by the hand of a second author, has tended to obscure the fact that the OJR offers us a rich source of information on how the practice of *kakawin* composition came into being, and how the unusual aspects of its formal structure may relate to choices that were made against the background of a pedagogical practice of long standing. Doing justice to this claim requires the writing of a "prehistory of the kakawin," which I have elsewhere begun to study in terms of the influence of the adoption of Indian commentarial techniques on the processes of transmission and "translation" of religious works of South Asia in the ancient archipelago (Hunter 2010). It will not be possible here to pursue the aim of writing such a history; however, we can put forward a few points of particular relevance to further studies of the OJR.

Here it is important to take note of the discovery by Lokesh Chandra (1995) of a fragment of the *Jānakī-haraṇa* of Kumāradāsa that has been preserved along with portions of a commentary that appear to be the "class notes" of a student whose introduction to this work was in the context of a *guru-śiṣya* transmission of the text. We should also note Lokesh Chandra's pioneering work (1997) that sheds light on the OJ *Amaramālā* (AM), a bilingual, Sanskrit/Old Javanese work on lexicography whose opening stanza is dedicated to the Śailendra monarch Jitendra. On the basis of this stanza, Krom (1926: 145–46) estimated that the AM was produced in the mid-eighth century CE, precisely that period when the crosscutting lines of religious patronage were most marked in the history of the Early Mataram. The AM lends further support to the importance of linkages between the Śailendra and Javanese *rakryān* like the Sañjaya in that its dedication is to a Śailendra ruler while its entire contents are devoted to Śaivite themes. Unless it can be shown that the opening stanzas of the AM are defective in some way, the existence of the AM shows us that the lexicographical tools that were important to literary composition in OJ must have been introduced in Java as early as the the mid-eighth century CE, concurrent with the first stages in the construction of Borobuḍur, and at least a century prior to the appearance of the first *kakawin* verses in the metrical inscription of 856 CE.

The AM is also important because it appears at a time in the history of ancient Java when the presuppositions of Pāṇinian grammar still played a role in how discourse cohesion was viewed within the pedagogical institutions of the archipelago. This comes out in verse 4 of the AM, cited in part below:

> *mangkana ikang mungguh ry ādi ning pada lwirnya pūliṅga strīliṅga napuṃsakaliṅga ya sambaddhāk(ĕ)na lawan ikang pāda ring wuri [...]*

> Thus too those [words] that have their place at the beginning of the line, whether they take the form of feminine, masculine or neuter gender, should be bound together with the words at the end [...]

While we know now that the study of certain aspects of Pāṇinian grammar continued to receive attention in the intellectual institutions of the later OJ tradition, by the time of the metrical inscription of 856 CE the questions of gender and case-terminations had ceased to be of practical concern in literary production, taken over by patterns of syntactic organization based on word-order, deictic articles, and other patterns of cohesion natural to a western-Malayo-Polynesian language like OJ.[9] The AM thus stands as testimony to both the importance of a pedagogy focused on the transmission of Sanskrit texts in ancient Java and the existence of a practice of literary composition in OJ that had advanced to the stage of requiring lexicographical materials like those that supported the production of *kāvya* in the subcontinent.

One of the problems that must be faced in any serious study of the OJR is the fact that its formal structure includes many unusual features. While a study of the influence of *arthālaṃkāra* developed in the OJR on the later tradition may well support Hooykaas' (1958a) thesis that the OJR represents an "exemplary kakawin," it differs markedly in terms of structure from all the later kakawin, beginning with the *Arjunawiwāha* of Mpu Kaṇwa (composed c. 1035–38 CE). While the cantos of the *kakawin* after Mpu Kaṇwa are monometrical, those of the OJR are marked by the use of multiple meters within a single canto and enormous variation in the length of cantos, or of sections of cantos using a single meter.[10] Furthermore, the OJR shows a marked tendency towards accepting both hiatus and doubling of consonants *metri causa*. These features link the OJR with the *kakawin* tradition of Bali, which Creese (1994) has noted appears to have taken the OJR as its primary model, but they are unusual by any standard of comparison with the East Javanese *kakawin* after Mpu Kaṇwa.

9. See Radicchi 1996 for evidence for the study of the Indian grammatical tradition in ancient Java.

10. In his first monograph on the relationship of the BK and OJR (1955) Hooykaas made a valiant effort to show that the unusual structure of the cantos of the OJR (enormous variation in length, multiple meters with sections in different meters also varying considerably in length) had its parallels in works of Kālidāsa, Bhaṭṭi, Bhāravi, Māgha and Śrīharṣa, and differed little from the style of the *kakawin* of East Java (produced c. 1035–1478 CE). However, while Hooykaas' comparison with the Indian examples is based on a careful statistical analysis, few students of the *kakawin* today are likely to agree that the monometrical structure of the cantos of East Javanese *kakawin* has much in common with the sprawling structure of the OJR.

Significant differences in vocabulary also exist between the OJR and the East Javanese *kakawin*. Poerbatjaraka (1932: 267–68) pointed out seven lexemes that occur only in the OJR or occur with a spelling that is unusual by later standards. This list can be expanded to include the use of words like *mata* and *weh*, which occur in the OJR with great frequency as markers of discourse prominence ("emphatics"). In the *Parwa* these words are found alongside homophones with more prosaic meanings ("eye" and "give" respectively), which eventually replaced the earlier functional lexemes completely. *Wi(h)* and *pi*, two other commonly used discourse markers found only in the OJR and *Parwa*, completely disappeared in the later *kakawin*, thus strengthening the case for an argument that both the OJR and the majority of the *Parwa* were produced within the same time period, a period likely stretching from the mid-ninth century to sometime in the mid- to late eleventh century.

Zoetmulder (1974: 231–32) has also pointed out that the OJR lacks the important set of words for expressing subtle modes of "aesthetic rapture" (*langö, mangö, lĕnglĕng*, and *lĕngĕng*, for example) as well as the auspicious *maṅgala* passage that was obligatory at the beginning of all later *kakawin*. Both these features are so prominent in the later *kakawin* that they can be taken as canonical, yet neither is found in the OJR.

The metrical structure of the OJR is also unusual. First, the number of meters used in the OJR is extraordinary by any standard: 81 according to the count of Poerbatjaraka's (1932: 53–66), including ten meters which follow the pattern of South Asian *gaṇa-vṛtta* meters, but to date have not been located in any Indian manual on metrics.[11] Second, the OJR is the only *kakawin* work that uses the *mātra-vṛtta* meter *āryā*, based on morae (*mātra*), instead of the alternation of "heavy" (*guru*) and "light" (*laghu*) syllables.

This is not the place to develop an in-depth analysis of the many anomalous characteristics of the OJR. However, it may be time to venture a hypothesis.

11. While Hooykaas 1955 has shown that there is little basis for earlier theories holding that the OJR shows signs of massive "interpolation," the use of the Indo-Javanese meter *Jagaddhita* in the penultimate verse of the OJR, and an unidentified meter of similar structure in the ultimate verse, suggest that these two verses are indeed later interpolations, especially given that these are the only two examples of Indo-Javanese meters known prior to the appearance of the *Arjunawiwāha* (composed c. 1035 CE). The fact that these two verses provide us with a name of the supposed author of the OJR suggests a later interpolation and brings to mind Balinese lists of the composers of the *kakawin*, which place the composition of the OJR in the twelfth century CE. It may be that these verses were added to the OJR at a time when Brahmin redactors of the *kakawin* tradition anachronistically applied the standards of a later age (when many *kakawin* were associated with single authors) to the OJR in order to strengthen a lineage of priestly authority centred on the composers of *kakawin*. See Rubenstein 2000 79–91, for a discussion of the perspective of Balinese geneological works like the *Babad Brāhmaṇa* on Javano-Balinese literary history.

Some years ago I became convinced that the problem of the unusual formal aspects of the OJR could only be solved by understanding the sociocultural and historical context that "produced" the OJR. To this end I reviewed the advances that have been made in the history of the Early Mataram in the past decades, related studies of insular and mainland Southeast Asia, and works on the archaeology and art history of the Early Mataram, including works on the textual traditions that informed the narrative reliefs of monuments like Borobuḍur and Prambanan.[12] In time, I noted the frequency with which analysts from several disciplines have stressed the interlocking patterns of religious patronage and practice in the Early Mataram, and began to think of what this might mean for a study of the processes by which Old Malay and Old Javanese emerged as literary languages that served the expressive needs of translocal cultural formations. By comparing several early texts from Mahāyāna and Śaiva works of the OJ didactic tradition, I reached the conclusion that both streams of ancient Javanese religious society were utilizing nearly identical practices of translation, commentary, and text-building.

The next step was to ask why is it that we have not looked to works like the *Divyāvadāna, Lalitavistara, Gaṇḍavyūha, Bhadracārī*, and the *Jātakamālā* of *Āryaśūra* as possible influences on the development of poetics in ancient Java, even though we know that these works were copiously illustrated at Caṇḍi Borobuḍur. I will not go into further detail here on what I believe are clear similarities in the adaptation of textual materials from Indian sources to visual and literary modes of narrative expression. More important for this study are the surprising facts that came to light through a chance choice of the *Lalitavistara* (LV) as the first work to be examined for possible similarities with the OJR. Based on study of the *gātha* of the LV, which likely represent an earlier phase in the development of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit than the prose sections of the LV, I noted striking similarities with the OJR. These include: hiatus and doubling of consonants *metri causa*; shared meters such as *vasantatilakā, śārdūlavikrīḍita*, and *upendravajrā*; the prominence of the *pathyā* form of the morae-based *āryā* meter (featured in the first *sarga* of the OJR and nowhere else in the *kakawin* tradition); the use of multiple meters in each *sarga*; common lexical choices; and so on.

The similarities are too numerous to be accounted for as mere coincidence. We might also note that the *gātha* of the LV display an unusual tolerance for loss of case-terminations, again *metri causa*. To the poets and pedagogues of ancient

12. A partial list of historical sources would include Christie 1986, 1991; Coedes and Damais 1992; Hall 1985, 1992; Kulke 1986, 1990; van Naerssen and de Iongh 1977; and Wolters 1982.

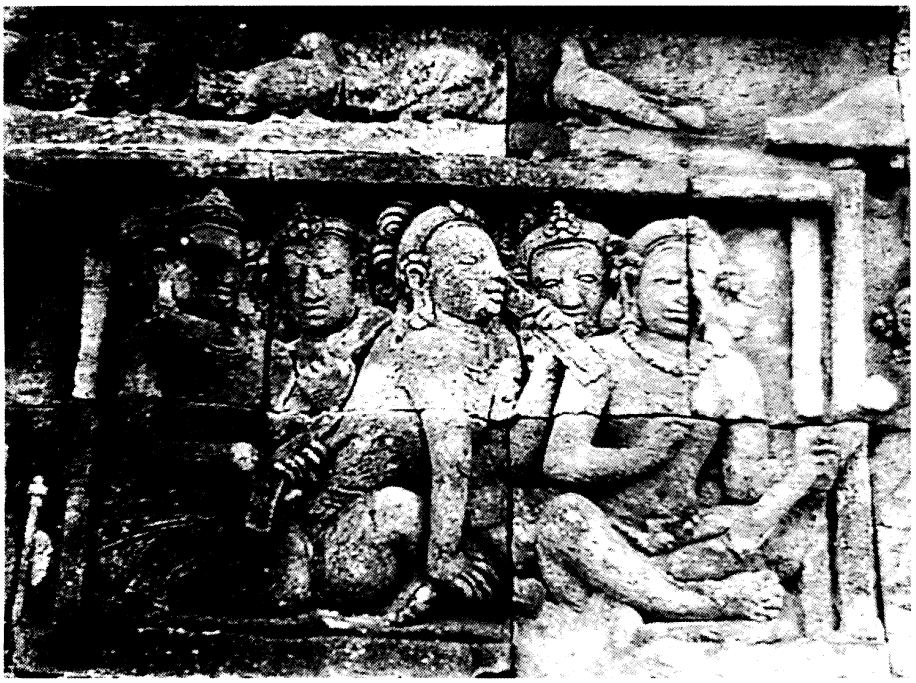


FIGURE 8.1: "Students in class with the Bodhisattva" from the *Lalitavistara* series of narrative reliefs at Caṇḍi Borobuḍur, Central Java.[13]

Java this may have suggested that the inflectional apparatus of Sanskrit could be dispensed with when composing in a "vernacular" (*Prakrit*) idiom, without losing the claim to truth-value that made Sanskrit *primus inter pares* in the linguistic environment of ancient Java.

The implications of a close relationship between the LV and OJR are many, but perhaps can be better summed up visually than through a lengthy written exposition. Here we call the reader's attention to Figure 8.1. Drawn from a section of the narrative reliefs illustrating the LV at Caṇḍi Borobuḍur, this relief is the left-half of a panel illustrating *Sarga* X of the LV, which has traditionally been titled "A Reversal in the Teaching of the Writing Classroom" (Lipiśālā-saṃdarśana-parivartaḥ). Appropriately enough for the conditions of a translocal society in which a high premium must have been placed on multilingual skills, this scene tells of how the young Bodhisattva amazed his writing teacher by revealing his ability to write in 64 forms of script and a plethora of languages. For our purposes the depiction of the Bodhisattva at the moment he amazes his teacher with a virtuoso display of erudition is important in that it illustrates the

13. Photography courtesy of Alice Frye and Eric Sean Nelson. For a published photograph of this relief from the *Lalitavistara* series of narrative reliefs found on the lower course of the first gallery at Borobuḍur, see Plate XIX.38 in van Erp and Krom 1920, Reliefs, Volume II.

translocal character of pedagogy in the era of Borobuḍur, while the depiction of the other students reading aloud from what can only be palm-leaf manuscripts illustrates the features of orality and collective study that we believe characterized the pedagogy of the Early Mataram era in Javanese history.

This relief from the *Lalitavistara* series of narrative reliefs at Borobuḍur stands out as a reminder of the fact that in the context of ancient Java to "read and study" were to "read and study together." It is this public, communicative aspect of the pedagogical practices of ancient Java that I want to underline here. I believe that we will begin to make further progress in understanding the OJR when we begin to think of literary composition in the Early Mataram as a cooperative process, much like those that lay behind the creation of the narrative reliefs of Borobuḍur or Prambanan, and much like the pedagogical and "translational" practices that underwrote the creation of a unique literature and literary language in the translocal culture of ancient Java.

E. *Śabdālaṃkāra* in the Metrical Inscription of 856 CE and the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*

As if to announce that the school of Indian poetics that dominated the literary culture of the Early Mataram was the school of Bhaṭṭi, Bhāmaha, and Daṇḍin, the OJR and the metrical inscription of 856 CE share a partiality for the use of *yamaka* that all but disappeared in the later language, in this way paralleling its diminished reputation on the subcontinent once "suggestion" (*dhvani, vyañjana*) had become the dominant analytical mode. As one might expect, alliteration (*anuprāsa*) shared pride-of-place with *yamaka* in the early *kakawin*, but did not suffer the same loss of prestige or interest in the latter tradition, instead living on with full force and vigour in works as late as the elegant *Sĕrat Wedatama* of nineteenth century Java and in the Javanese tradition that discerns two major sub-groupings of sonorous repetition: *purwakanthi swara* (assonance) and *purwasastra* (alliteration).[14]

14. See Robson 1990: 10–12 for a discussion of these terms with examples drawn from the *Wedhatama*. The opening lines of this late product of classical Javanese court poetry illustrate the degree to which the Javanese fondness for the effects of repetition on both sonorous and semantic levels has lived on for over a millennium since the time of the metrical inscription of 856 CE. There are even hints of a *kāñcī-yamaka* here that cannot have been accidental:

Mingkar mingkur ing angkara	Turning away from selfish motives,
Akarana karenan mardi siwi	As one is pleased to give instruction to sons,
Sinawung resmi-ning kidung	It is cast in the form of a delightful song,
Sinuba sinukarta [...]	Finely finished and well turned [...]

Wedhatama 1.1 with the translation by S.O. Robson 1990: 19–20.

There can be no doubt that Bhaṭṭi's systematic account of 21 forms of *yamaka*s in BK 10.2–22 had a profound effect on the use of these figures in the OJR. The relative brevity and worn condition of the inscription of 856 CE make it more difficult to determine whether there has been direct influence from Bhaṭṭi's system, yet his *yamaka*s share with those of the OJR a systematic aspect that makes them amenable to the basic sub-division of *avyapeta* (contingent) and *vyapeta* (noncontingent) forms in the system developed by Daṇḍin.[15] If not from this fact, but from the sheer exuberance with which *yamaka*s were displayed in the literary and inscriptional record of ninth-century Java, we must assume that the study of these figures of phonological doubling played an important part in the literary pedagogy of the Early Mataram.

The question now naturally arises: why did *yamaka* have a special appeal to the poets of ancient Java? Gary Tubb (2003) has noted the sonorous and hypnotic effects that can be achieved through the use of *yamaka*. He has also called attention to Bhaṭṭi's concentration on the systematic presentation of *yamaka* that "exemplify effects that depend upon the repeated use of a particular variety of *yamaka*" (2003:18), and to the contrast of *śleṣa* (bitextual poetry) with *yamaka*, bringing out an element that may offer us a way to begin to understand the role of *yamaka* in ninth-century Java (2003: 20–21):

> Probably the most important difference between *yamaka* and *śleṣa* is that while *śleṣa* may lend itself to treatments of disguised characters because it involves two meanings masquerading as one, *yamaka* is more likely to be used in connection with two identities that are both on public display [...] whether these two identities are simultaneous, as we [...] see in Kālidāsa's [...] description of Daśaratha, with its exposure of the contrasts and balances in his character, or sequential, as we will see in the fear and destruction brought about by the violence in the battle cantos of Bhāravi and Māgha, and as can be seen in Bhaṭṭi's description of the effects of the fire in Laṅkā [...][16]

"Public display" was certainly one of the most important elements at work in the metrical inscription of 856 CE, but in this case it appears that the doubling effects of *yamaka* were not introduced so much to contrast two identities, but rather to strengthen a single identity in the projection of the power and prestige

15. Not all scholars accept Söhnen's 1972 analysis of the development of systematic treatments of *yamaka* that would place Bhaṭṭi after Kālidāsa and the *Nāṭya-śāstra* prior to Daṇḍin, Bhāmaha, Bhāravi, and Māgha. See Tubb 2003 for a view that sees the question as still unresolved, and Söhnen 1995, 508–09, for a concordance of the *yamaka* as found in the NŚ, BK and the works of Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha.

16. For a thoroughgoing analysis of the history of *śleṣa* in Sanskrit see Bronner 2010. We owe the term "bitextual poetry" to Bronner's work on "simultaneous narration" in Sanskrit poetry.

of the lineage of Rakai Pikatan and Rakai Kayuwangi. It is as if *yamaka*s serve in this inscription to underline and accentuate their recent success in uniting the realm and establishing themselves as the paramount political force in Central Java, and the double glory that was to be won from the occasion of the dedication of a commemorative shrine of the recently deceased monarch (Rakai Pikatan) by his heir (Rakai Kayuwangi, Dyah Lokapāla).

Speaking of Rakai Pikatan, for example, the inscription uses a "non-contingent *yamaka*" based on a doubling of the word *jawa*, thus aligning the righteousness of the king with the realm that he protects:

6.b *mangrakṣa ri bhūmi jawârjawa*
sincere and upright *(arjawa)* he protected the land of Java *(Jawa)*
[...]

Descriptions of the majesty and beauty of the sanctuary *(Śiwa-gṛha)* likewise capitalize on the doubling power of *yamaka* to increase the sense of physical grandeur:

15.d *mahayu kuaiḥ ta panti tinapan tiruan sawaluy*
Beautiful were the many smaller buildings, fitted out as hermitages, proper to be imitated in their turn.

17.d *sa-gupura parhyangan aganitârigana tā pacalān*
This abode of the gods *(parhyangan)* was equipped with tall temple-gates (and) countless immobile (sculptures of) beautiful women.

18.a *apa ta paḍanya diwyatama diwyakĕnā ya hanā*
What could be its equal in divine splendour? It existed in order to be deified.

There can be no doubt that the composition of *yamaka* with such specialized ends in mind, and their being featured in such a prominent place of public display, must have been supported by a thorough training in the norms of the *śabdālaṃkāra* tradition of South Asia as understood during the period of Bhaṭṭi, Bhāmaha, and Daṇḍin. At the same time, if we look back at the phrase *ta panti tinapan tiruan* in 15.d above a singular feature stands out. This is the fact that the syllable *-in-* intervenes between the *t-* and *apan* of the second member of this *yamaka*. This might seem a copyist's error if it were not for the fact that the syllable *-in-* is in fact one of the most important "voice-marking" affixes of the OJ morphosyntactic system. In his analysis of what he termed "rules of assonance" in the OJR, Hooykaas (1958b: 130–32) noted a significant number of similar cases, some of them based on permissible degrees of latitude around phonological or orthographic similarities, but others based on a

similar invisibility of the OJ voice-marking affixes in the determination of *yamaka*.

For scholars who have long suspected that there was an indigenous sense of syntactic analysis in ancient Java, despite the lack of an overt theorizing of syntax like the Pāṇinian system of India, the "invisibility" of morphemes with a morphosyntactic function in the composition of OJ *yamaka* allows us to recognize the existence of an indigenous understanding of the difference between lexical and syntactic levels of linguistic function. More important for the present study, these special cases in the determination of *yamaka* presuppose a long history of pedagogy and literary practice: no other explanation can account for a state of development in which the conventions of *yamaka* could be applied in a manner close to contemporaneous Indian praxis, yet with frequent adjustments to the syntactic norms of OJ in the process of a Javanese Prakritization of the Sanskritic sources.

F. *Yamaka* in the OJR: The Problem of Univocality

In looking at *śabdālaṃkāra* in the OJR, we note that in addition to the great profusion of effects of alliteration and assonance, the use of *yamaka* stands out as an important element of structure. Yet surprisingly Bhaṭṭi's systematic presentation of *yamaka* in BK 10.2–22 is not reflected in the thematically related passages from the OJR. Instead, in OJR 10.68–11.8 the dramatic possibilities of the *yamaka* as presented by Bhaṭṭi are "translated" in the form of a brilliant display of verses in *daṇḍaka* meter and the heavy use of alliteration and assonance.

Hooykaas (1958b) made an important contribution to the study of the OJR with his extensive study of what he referred to as "four-line *yamaka*" in the OJR. If we follow the tradition beginning with Daṇḍin that there must be a change of meaning in a pair of consecutive homophonic lexemes in order to qualify as *yamaka*—and conversely that simple reduplication *(āmreḍita)* does not constitute a legitimate basis for *yamaka*—then it may be that some of the *yamaka* adduced by Hooykaas are closer to assonance than to true semantic doubling. That being said, there is no doubt that the *yamaka* are a theme of some importance in the OJR. Hooykaas (1958b) called special attention to three extended passages from the OJR that make use of *yamaka* in some form in nearly every line:

- the depiction of the building of the bridge to Laṅkā in OJR 16.1–40
- the description of the restoration of Laṅkā in OJR 24.97–123
- the description of the return of Rāma and Sītā to Ayodhyā by aerial chariot in OJR 24.253–26.9

These three "*yamaka* blocks" constitute a special problem in the OJR, for they are aligned with two points in the OJR where several scholars have detected a "change in voice" in the work. The first of these changes in voice aligns with *Sarga* 16 of the OJR, at which point the OJR moves markedly away from the BK, and at no point afterwards can be said to translate the BK. The second change of voice is found at OJR 24.92 where one can almost see the point in the narrative that establishes a final cadence to the work. Here we find the text seeming to come to a close with the restoration of the earth and the kingdom of Laṅkā to a state of unspoiled beauty after the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa. However, immediately following this there appears to be almost a new beginning to the narrative, which is then carried forward through the joyful return of Rāma, Sītā, and their companions to Ayodhyā. Zoetmulder (1974: 230) has commented on some of the stylistic differences that appear in the OJR after verse 92 of the twenty-fourth *Sarga*:

> The number of words that are uncommon, or even not found elsewhere at all, is legion; grammatical irregularities and poetic license abound [and] in certain places [...] the author seems to have set himself the task of showing off his virtuosity [...] and so perhaps felt obliged to take liberties with the language [...] [Y]amaka are not absent from the first part of the *kakawin*, as Hooykaas has demonstrated [...] but why do they give the impression of obscurity and artificiality which is so noticeable in the final part? Personally I feel inclined to assume a difference in authorship, which does not mean, however, that the final *sarga*s are necessarily of a much later date.

I have been inclined to accept Zoetmulder's judgment here, but a more careful reading of the last three *sarga*s of the OJR also suggests another possibility: if we look at passages like OJR 24.126–241, which give a rather chaste rendition of Sītā's fire ordeal and the preparations to depart for Ayodhyā, then it appears that the work of the "virtuoso hand" that many have recognized in the last sections of the OJR is not always present in the same degree, but appears to be interwoven with a narrative core that maintains a more conservative approach to figuration, especially in the domain of *śabdālaṃkāra*.

This is not the place to attempt an in-depth analysis of the sections of the OJR following verse 24.92 that might shed light on whether some part of these sections can be traced to a later historical period, though that is certainly a matter of singular interest. For this study what is more important is the question of univocality. For it is not just the several "changes of voice" in the OJR that suggest the presence of more than one hand at work in its composition, of the OJR,

but also the nature of the "*yamaka* blocks" and the ways that a number of structural elements, including but not limited to verses featuring *yamaka*, are dispersed throughout the OJR. This is another point where a hypothesis is warranted, rather than a definitive statement: if we accept that the OJR was produced in the early ninth century, at a point in the literary history of ancient Java prior to the emergence of the idea and practice of single authorship, what is to prevent us from understanding some of the anomalous features of the OJR in terms of the possibility that the OJR is not univocal at all, but instead may bear as many signs of collective composition as the narrative reliefs of the Rāma story at Caṇḍi Prambanan?

To name only one factor in support of this hypothesis, we might recall the extraordinary number of meters (81 by Poerbatjaraka's count) that are found in the OJR. Given that several passages in the Parwa literature and the OJ inscriptions suggest that during the ninth and tenth centuries recitation of either prose or poetic works presupposed a musical aspect of performance, is it reasonable to suppose that a single author could master composition in both quantitative and musical aspects of the rendition of 81 distinct metrical forms? We have only to add to this that any single author of the OJR would have also had to be a consummate master of both *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra*, and adept as well in the art of interweaving extended passages of *alaṃkāra* exposition with a coherent narrative—a narrative that is frequently interspersed with passages of dialogue or monologue suggesting familiarity with the conventions of the theater. Contemplating more fully the number of structural elements that must have been developed beyond a minor degree to produce the OJR, one is tempted to think of an "orchestration" of the work, something akin to the way in which musical elements of disparate structural types are made to form a harmonious whole in the art of the Javanese gamelan ensembles.

My reason for problematizing the univocality of the OJR-the supposition of an earlier generation of scholars that it represents an authored work in some sense-is not to initiate a controversy, but rather to provide a new framework for elucidating the many features of the OJR that make it distinct from the products of a later age, when changes in the sociopolitical context of patronage for the literary arts did call into being something like a culture of authorship. Accepting the possibility that there may have been specialist contributors to the OJR whose work was in some sense collective makes it possible to understand the development of a whole repertoire of OJ *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra* against the background of a longer history of pedagogy, whose products may have been incorporated into the narrative core of the OJR through something akin to a process of orchestration.

G. *Yamaka* in the OJR: The Aesthetic Effects of Doubling and Repetition

If we compare the *yamaka* of Bhaṭṭi, the OJR, and the metrical inscription of 856 CE, we find many similarities that may shed further light on the particular appeal of this type of *śabdālaṃkāra* to the early composers in both the *kāvya* and *kakawin* traditions. As in the case of the uses of *yamaka* in the inscription of 856 CE, one can cite examples from the OJR that illustrate the effects of monumentality that can be suggested through repetition:

tibākĕn ikanang gunung anung agöng ya tomunggwi sor
tumūt gunung anak(k) anekana ikāng umunggwing ruhur
śilātala subaddha kapwa tinatān tinumpang tinap
ya teka tinibān lĕmah ya maratā tumūta ng hĕnī (OJR 16.2)[17]

Mountains, each one great in size, were thrown down taking their place as the base,
While smaller hills followed, piled up to take their place at the top,
A well-joined stone surface was then arranged, piled up in well-arranged (layers),
Soil was then thrown down until it became level, followed (finally) by sand.

The power of noncontingent *yamaka* to create effects of "binding" across a wide separation within the verse can lend itself to the design of particular aesthetic effects. Bhaṭṭi, for example, at one point uses a "separated" (*vipatha*) *yamaka* based on phonological repetition of the first and last lines of a verse to augment the sense of separation (*vipatha*) experienced by Sītā during her captivity in Laṅkā:

kāntā saḥamānā
duḥkhaṃ cyuta-bhūṣā /
rāmasya viyuktā
kāntā saḥamānā (BK 10.16)

She who is beautiful, able to endure
pain, and bereft of her ornaments,

17. The repetitions within the series *tumūt, tinatān, tinumpang, tinap, tinibān*, and *tumūta* may not constitute a *yamaka* in the strict sense of the word, but neither are they simply a case of assonance. The sequence of vowels formed by the assonant repetitions of the verse (*tumū-tina-tinu-tina-tini-tumū*) have an almost musical quality that suggests resonances with the solfeggio syllables of the Javanese and Balinese systems of gamelan composition.

Who is separated from Rāma,
His beloved, who has never lost her dignity.[18]

Similar effects are created in an elaborate "*yamaka* block" based on the *kāñci-yamaka*, or "clasp-*yamaka*" that binds the ends and beginnings of successive lines through a repeated phonological sequence.[19] While the example of this figure from Bhaṭṭi (BK 10.8) extends only across a single verse, there are at least two cases of *kañcī-yamaka* in the OJR that extend across a lengthy series of verses. One of these sequences, extending for six verses between OJR 16.24 and 16.29, elaborates upon the sorrow of Rāma in separation from Sītā that appears to consciously echo the depiction of Sītā's longing in OJR 8.155, and to echo in a more distant way the emotional tone conveyed by the *vipatha-yamaka* of BK 10.16. These verses illustrate the considerable latitude that was allowed in the matching of phonological sequences between lines. At the same time they illustrate the integration of *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra* in the OJR, in that OJR 16.26 represents a case of the *arthālaṃkāra* known as *apahnuti*, or "denial":

gawe nira-ng Madana lareng jagat
jagângayat laras anihāngakĕn panah
panādhya ring priya-wirahâtikātara
tatan wurung rucira katangga yan kucup (OJR 16.25)
kucur nikang wway umĕlĕkah sakeng watu
wĕtu-nya śitala tuwi yâlilang maho
aho yateka milu maweh panas rika[20]
ri kāla ning priyawiraha tatan matīs (OJR 16.26)

The work of the Love God is to bring pain to the world,
Ever alert (he stands) with his bow outstretched, putting his arrows
at the ready,

18. I have added the phrase "at rejecting his enemy" based on a commentary on the BK:

> [...] *sahamānā, trilokanāyakaṃ Rāmaṃ parityajya rākṣasanaṃ na svīkariṣyāmīty ātmābhimānena yukteti bhāvaḥ* [...]
>
> [...] with pride *(sahamānā)* [means]: "having abandoned Lord Rāma, hero of the three worlds, I will never accept (this) demon (Rāvaṇa)" spoken with a strong sense of pride, thus the sense of the passage [...]

19. Gerow adopts the usage of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata for his glossary of Indian figures 1971, 228–29, and so uses *cakravāla* to describe concatenated lines and verses that Aichele 1926/1931 describes under the term *kañcī-yamaka*, following the tradition of commentary on the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*. Gerow then bases his explanation of the figure *kañcī-yamaka* on the usage of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (16.66), *Agni-purāṇa* (343.15) and *Alaṅkāra-sarvasva* of Ruyakka (3.44).

20. Prior to corrections made by Aichele 1926, 935; 1931: 175–76, based on an analysis of the *yamaka* in this verse, OJR 16.26c has been read as: *amogha teka milu maweh panas ika*. See, for example, Santoso 1979, Vol. II: 396.

That are the means of causing excessive pain to those separated from
their lovers,
Never failing, (fashioned from) buds of *rucira* and *katangga*
blossoms. (16.25)
The gush of water spouting from stone,
Emerges coolly, and is moreover pure and clear,
Ah behold! That too joins in bringing a feeling of heat,
At the time one suffers the pangs of separation (cool water) has
no coolness. (16.26)

The use of *yamaka* in OJR 24.81–86, just prior to the first "change of voice" at OJR 24.92, represents the locus classicus for the use of *kañcī-yamaka* in the OJR. Here the aim of the *yamaka* is not to accentuate the strong emotions suffered by separated lovers, but rather to produce a tightly controlled rhetorical structure appropriate to the delivery of ethical instruction in the culminating verses of Rāma's instructions to Vibhīṣaṇa on behavior befitting a king. These verses are rightly famous in the Balinese tradition for their unique blending of sonorous elements of poetic structure with a statement of moral and ethical values (*tutur*). While this sequence extends across six verses (OJR 24.81–86), the first verse is among those most frequently memorized by devotees of the art of *mabasan*, a collective reading and translation of OJ (Kawi) palm-leaf manuscripts that carries on the ancient pedagogical traditions illustrated in the relief from Caṇḍi Borobuḍur illustrated in Figure 1:

prihĕn tĕmĕn dharma dhumāraṇa ng sarāt
sarāga sang sādhu sireka tūtana
tan artha tan kāma pi donya tan yaśa
ya śakti sang sajjana dharmarakṣaka (OJR 24.81)

Strive intently for the dharma that supports the world,
It is the passion of the holy man that you should follow,
It is not wealth that should be your aim, neither pleasure nor fame,
The power of good men depends on their protection of the Dharma.

While the systematic use of *yamaka* may have disappeared from the annals of Javano-Balinese literary history after the Early Mataram, there are many signs in the later Javanese tradition that the characteristic insistence in figures like the *yamaka* on a presumed unity between the sonorous and semantic aspects of the signifier played a special role in the development of the richness and complexity of semiotic systems in the literary and performing arts. These effects may even have outlived those of the "figures of meaning" (*arthālaṃkāra*), which appear to have merged in later Javano-Balinese traditions into the background of a

more general sense of word-play and the persistence of a *nirukta*-like conviction that words can be unpacked to reveal multiple meanings and layers of significance.

H. Bhaṭṭi's *Arthālaṃkāra* and the OJR

When we turn our attention to Bhaṭṭi's systematic exposition of *arthālaṃkāra* in BK 10.22–74, and its relationship to the figures developed in OJR 11.9–96, new insights emerge about the poetic praxis of the poet(s) of ancient Java and their understanding of the possibilities of figuration presented by the South Asian system of *arthālaṃkāra*. From even as early in the OJR as the sixth *sarga*, its poet(s) had begun to move away from a line-by-line reflection of the BK and to embed directly translated verses from the BK in a loosely-knit structure of narrative that flows naturally from the more paratactic structures of the OJ language. At times the narrative passages developed seem to reflect the conventions of theatre, where multiple perspectives on an event are provided in dialogue or short interior monologues that comment on the action of the narrative.

One consequence of this text-building strategy is that the more tightly-controlled verses of the BK served as a source of figural inspiration for the OJR, but did not dominate the overall flow of the narrative. From even a cursory review of the correspondences between Bhaṭṭi's exposition of the possibilities of *arthālaṃkāra* in BK 10.22–74 and their mirroring in the OJR, it is also apparent that the poet(s) of the OJR were keenly aware of the possibilities of figuration, and anxious to expand the repertoire of tropes and figures at their disposal.

When we look at individual cases of the response of the poet(s) of the OJR to the possibilities of Bhaṭṭi, it is clear that the intricate subdivisions of Bhaṭṭi's system have been reduced to a smaller set, including *upamā, rūpaka, utprekṣā, vyatireka*, and *apahnuti* that are among those most prominent in the Indian tradition, and indeed may represent something like a core set of figures with near-universal application, especially in traditions founded on the art of the verbal icon. Lest this reduction in the number of figures prominent in the Javanese tradition be taken as a fault, let us recall that the poets of ancient Java were largely concerned with the practice of poetry and the development of a literary language that could fulfill the expressive needs of emergent polities like the Śailendra and Sañjaya. As later developments in the *kakawin* show, this did not mean an absence of attention to psychological or philosophical aspects of the art of figuration, but rather the absence of a scholastic tradition like that of India,

with its characteristic focus on the encyclopedic listing of a multitude of variants on a major theme. This tells us more about contrasts in the socio-cultural settings of literary production than it can about the relative worth of the two traditions.

In contrast with the relationship of Bhaṭṭi's presentation of *śabdālaṃkāra* in BK 10.2–22 with the OJR—where *yamaka* are dispersed throughout the work but are not employed in the thematically related passages of OJR 10.68–11.8—the *arthālaṃkāra* of BK 10.22–74 are directly translated in OJR 11.9–96. At the same time, the *arthālaṃkāra*s of the OJR are by no means limited to the 88 verses of OJR 11.9–96, but are also dispersed throughout the work, sometimes as direct translations of verses of the BK, at other times developed independently, often enough in passages of some length that reveal the exuberance of the Javanese poets in their development of the figural resources of *arthālaṃkāra*.

One example of a directly translated figure that appears early in the OJR is the incorporation of the figure *ekāvalī* of BK 2.19 into an equivalent verse from the OJR (OJR 2.19).[21] In this case, unusual for the OJR, the Old Javanese version follows its Sanskrit original so closely that a single translation can suffice for both renditions of the theme, though to be sure there are major differences in choice of lexemes and syntactic organization:

na tajjalam yan na sucāru-paṅkajam
na paṅkajam tad yad alīna-ṣaṭpadam/
na ṣaṭpado 'sau na juguñja yaḥ kalaṃ
na guñjitaṃ tan na jahāra yan manaḥ// (BK 2.19)
sakweh nikāng talaga tan hana tan patuñjung
tuñjungnya tan hana kirang pada mesi kumbang/
kumbangnya kapwa muni tan hana tan paśabda
śabdanya karṇṇasukha tan hana tan manojña// (OJR 2.19)

There were no ponds without lovely lotus-blossoms,
No lotus-blossoms that did not conceal a bee,
No bees that did not raise a melodious clamour with their buzzing,
No melodious buzzing that did not captivate the mind.

A comparison of BK 10.26 with OJR 11.11 reveals a case where the *rūpaka*s of Bhaṭṭi are translated in the OJR as a series of *upamā*s. Bhatti's figure depends on the direct superimposition of the means of comparison on the subject of

21. For a definition of *ekāvalī* see Monier-Williams 1981: 230. Based on the literal meaning of *ekāvalī* ("a single string of pearls or flowers or beads"), the figure consists of a series of sentences "where the subject of each following sentence has some characteristic of the predicate of the preceding one."

comparison (*upameye upamānāropa*), while the OJR translation introduces comparative phrases (*ka-haran, tulya*) to establish the link between the two terms of the relationship:

vraṇa-kandara-līna-śastra-sarpaḥ pṛthu-vakṣaḥ-sthala-karkaśôru-bhittiḥ/
cyuta-śoṇita-baddha-dhātu-rāgaḥ śuśubhe vānara-bhū-dharas tadâsau//
(BK 10.26)

Then that monkey, who like a mountain bears the earth,
Whose caverns were wounds that hid the serpents of (his enemies' spent) weapons,
Whose hard, broad slopes were his firm and massive chest,
Whose ochre ores were the blood that oozed (from his wounds),
shone forth (in all his glory).

wet ning göng parwatāwān paḍa nira kaharan tambing nekang ḍaḍâlwā
rambut makrĕp mapañjang ya ta kaharan alas nā ng śirah yeka puñcak/
mwang tangwan yekanolā kani nira ya guhā dhātutulyekanang rāh
nā ling ning wre saharṣâmuji-muji ya wijah kapwa mojar magupyan//
(OJR 11.1)

"Because of the magnitude of his being like a mountain, his broad chest—there—can be called its slopes,
While his long, thick hair can be called its forest, and—there—his head is its peak,
And those arrows are snakes, his wounds the caves, while his blood is comparable to the ochre ores (of the caves),"
That was what the monkeys said as they happily praised him, all elated as they spoke, nudging each other with knowing glances.

A series of verses illustrating *upamā* in BK (BK 10.31–36) demonstrate both the degree to which the poet(s) of the OJR had developed local resources for indicating the comparative relationship, and the tendency of the poet(s) of the OJR to embed translated verses within the structure of an expanded narrative. OJR 11.18, for example, replaces the *yathā* of BK 10.32 with *ata*, a marker of discourse prominence, while OJR 10.19 uses OJ *kadi*, "like," in place of the *saha* of BK 10.33. At this point the OJR breaks away from the BK and introduces "Sītā's Letter," a passage that stands out as one of the great achievements of literary form in the ancient period, and an early example of the incorporation of a tradition of letter-writing into the *kakawin*.[22]

22. See van der Molen 2003, for a finely-nuanced study of "Sītā's Letter" (OJR 11.22–32) as an early example of the Javanese epistolary tradition.

When the OJR again returns to a closer correspondence with the BK, it is in a verse (OJR 11.39) that appears to translate the *sama-upamā* of BK 10.36 by means of the OJ prefix *sa-*, which has similar "associative" functions. However, there has been a thematic shift in the OJR, for the use of *sa-* in the OJR occurs with a subordinate simile referring to Sītā, while in the BK *saha* is found in a simile referring to Rāvaṇa. There has been a shift in interpretation, too, for in the OJR Sītā is not understood as a spark of fire that will bring the danger of ultimate destruction to Rāvaṇa. Instead, the gentleness of her "light that glows like fireflies" is set in opposition to the harshness of his being a lion sleeping in the forest of his capital city. All these differences underline creative aspects of the art of translation as understood among the poets and pedagogues of ancient Java:

yuṣmān acetan kṣaya-vāyu-kalpān sītā-sphuliṅgaṃ parigṛhya jālmaḥ/
laṅkā-vanaṃ siṃhasamo 'dhiśete martuṃ dviṣann ity avadad
dhanūmān// (BK 10.36)

Not realizing that you are the whirlwind of destruction at the end of an eon,
That fool of an enemy (Rāvaṇa) has taken hold of the spark of fire who is Sītā.
For the sake of his own death, he sleeps like a lion in the forest of Laṅkā;
So spoke Hanūmān.

Naranātha ikā musuhta singha
pinakālasnya ikang purī ri Lĕngkā
dayitā Janakātmajā hana ngkā
sira tâpuy sakunang-kunang ya tâlöng (OJR 11.39)

"My lord, that enemy of yours is a lion
Whose jungle is the court-city of Laṅkā,
The beloved daughter of Janaka is there,
She is fire that glows with the light of fireflies."

The degree to which the poet(s) of the OJR display an understanding of the subtle distinctions among the *arthālaṃkāra* of Bhaṭṭi comes out in a comparison of BK 10.40 and OJR 11.5. Here we are dealing with the figure *vyatireka*, described by Gerow (1971: 276–77) as a figure "in which two notoriously similar things are said to be subject to a point of difference."[23]

samatāṃ śaśi-lekhayôpayāyād avadātā pratanuḥ kṣayeṇa Sītā/
yadi nāma kalaṅka indu-lekhām ativṛtto laghayen na câpi bhāvī// (BK 10.40)

23. The commentators explain that in BK 10.45 the crescent moon's being inscribed with a mark (*kalaṅka indu-lekhām*) leads to the "less-ness" (*nyūnatā*) of the means of comparison (*upamānā*)

A comparison of the crescent moon with the body of Sītā,
pure and slender from being emaciated, might be possible,
If the moon, in the post or in the future,
were not already marked with a blemish.

gĕlāna manglih mawĕnĕs sirâkuru
wulan rikang kṛṣṇa paḍā nireng kṣaya/
kunĕng kasor ning śaśiwimba de nira
ikā kalĕngkanya ya jāti tan hilang// (OJR 11.45)

Wilting and despondent she has grown pale and thin,
So the moon at the wane is like unto her in being emaciated,
But she has indeed bested the moon,
For its defect is original, and will not disappear.

Another figure of no small degree of popularity in the OJR is the *utprekṣā*, which in the later *kakawin* tradition remained very popular and was further developed along with a supporting vocabulary of verbal modifiers and a growing sensitivity to the possibilities of "superimposition" as a figural strategy. The translation of BK 10.45 in OJR 11.51 is thus all the more striking in being more prosaic than the products of a later age:

sthitam iva parirakṣituṃ samantād udadhi-jalaugha-pariplavād
dharitrīm /
gagana-tala-vasundharāntarāle jala-nidhi-vegasahaṃ prasārya deham //
(BK 10.45)[24]

Standing there between heaven and earth,
Its body capable of warding off the onslaught of the waters of the sea,
(Mount Mahendra) seemed to be protecting the four quarters of the earth,
From the rushing flood of the sea.

compared to its object (Sītā's slender body), thus to the superiority *(ādhikam)* of the subject of comparison *(upameya)* and the figure *vyatirekha*. A modern Balinese translation of this line affirms its reading as an OJ instance of *vyatireka*:

nanging kasor rupan bulane antuk Ida, duaning cedranyane manggeh tan ical

"But the moon is defeated by her, for its defect is permanent, and will not disappear," Warna et al. 1986: 299.

24. Note that the comparative particle *iva* here modifies a verbal derivation (*sthitam*) rather than a noun phrase (as is the case in use of the simile, or *upamā*). See Daṇḍin's KD 2.226–34 for the first of many discussions of this distinction based on the use of *iva* in the phrase *limpatīva tamo 'ṅgāni varsatīvāñjanaṃ nabhaḥ*.

gunung magöng Meru paḍanya śāśrī
samīpa ning sāgara n unggu sāra /
sake takutnya r kěběkekana ng rat
matangnya n weh tambakakěn awaknya (OJR 11.51)

(Mount Mahendra) was a massive mountain, equal to Mount Meru in its glory and splendour,
It was at the edge of the ocean that it stood solidly,
Because of its fear that the world would be filled (with the ocean's flood),
That was the reason that it had indeed made a dam with its own body.[25]

A more spectacular use of a form of *utprekṣā* comes out in OJR 11.84 which translates the figure of *utprekṣāvayava* exemplified in BK 10.70. As Gerow tells us (1971: 138), this type of *utprekṣā* is that in which "further subordinate metaphors explicate and expand the primary ascription." In the OJ tradition the development of the figure in OJR 11.84 stands at the head of a long line of developments that suggests that later poets were often judged by their ability to produce a sophisticated reworking of the theme of the "darkness that hides itself at the approach of the moon":

śaraṇam iva gataṃ tamo nikuñje viṭapi-nirākṛta-candra-raśmy-arātau/
pṛthu-viṣama-śilāntarāla-saṃsthaṃ sa-jalaghana-dyuti bhītavat sasāda// (BK 10.70)

The darkness, whose colour was like that of clouds heavy with rain,
That had sought shelter in gentle thickets,
Whose branches warded off the rays of the moon, the enemies of night,
Sank down into the spaces between enormous, uneven boulders,
As if—from fear—to hide itself.

dadi mapasah malayū ng pětěng amrih
sumusup i sor nikanang kayu mārěněb /
ri sěla-sělā nikanang watu n unggu
kadi matakut ri bhaṭāra śaśāngka (OJR 11.84)

So it was that the darkness took fright, in cautious apprehension,
Slipping beneath trees of luxuriant foliage,

25. I have retained the somewhat clumsy coordination of "because of" (*sake*) and "that was the reason" (*matangnya*) in the translation of OJR 11.51c-d and the original order of phrases in OJR 11.51b in order to allow a translation that more clearly captures the effects of the complementizing particles (*n, r, an*) in those three lines.

And finding a place in the interstices of great stones,
As if afraid of the Lord of the Moon.

For a further understanding of the development of the *utprekṣā* in OJ we should first review the pioneering work of Aichele on the ways the Sanskrit tradition of figures and tropes found its way into the kakawin literature of Java.[26] Producing his first work on the subject before it had become generally known that the OJR in some sense "translates" the BK, Aichele (1926/1931) noted frequent appearances of *upamā, rūpaka, utprekṣā*, and *apahnuti* in the OJR, as well as their continuing development in works like the *Arjunawiwāha* (AW) and *Bhāratayuddha* (BY). For our purposes, one of the most important aspects of Aichele's discussion is his identification of several figures in the OJR as leading directly back to the work of Kālidāsa, and in particular the *Raghuvaṃśa* (RV).

While not a few of the figures studied by Aichele for the OJR can be shown to be direct translation from the work of Bhaṭṭi, there are at least two cases where a figure developed in the OJR cannot be traced in the BK, but appears rather to be drawn from the RV. In this case the comparisons developed in Aja's lament at the death of Indumatī in RV 8.59, appear to be a rich source of figures found in the OJR. Rather than being directly incorporated into a single verse of the OJR, two of the comparisons developed in RV 8.59 appear in the OJR spread across a number of verses that expand on the theme of Rāma's grief in separation from Sītā, a theme that has much in common with that of Aja's lament. Significantly, these are part of a series of verses (OJR 7.22–30) that expand on the translation of BK 7.7–13 in OJR 7.11–21. Since these later verses from the OJR do not repeat or translate materials from the BK, they appear to represent an augmentation of the possibilities of the BK with material drawn from the RV:[27]

a. From Aja's lament upon the death of Indumatī in the RV

kalam anya-bhṛtāsu bhāṣitaṃ kala-haṃsīṣu madālasam gatam/
pṛṣatīṣu vilolam īkṣitaṃ pavanādhūta-latāsu vibhramāḥ// (RV 8.59)

In the calls of the cuckoos, the sweet music of your words,
In the slow gait of lovely swans, your languid way of walking,
In the quick movements of the eyes of the deer,

26. See Hooykaas 1957 for his study of the *arthālaṃkāra*s of Bhaṭṭi. Hooykaas was impressed enough by Aichele's article of 1926 that he produced a Dutch translation of that work (see Aichele 1931).

27. These same passages illustrate the wide range of 'loans' made by the poet(s) of the OJR from the RV in developing their repertoire of figures. As Aichele has shown (1926: 936; 1931: 177), the comparison linking the tail of a peacock to Sītā's hair-knot in OJR 7.25c-d is very likely drawn from RV 9.67, which describes Daśaratha's reluctance to slay a peacock dancing near his horse due to the resemblance of its tail to his wife's lustrous hair-braid.

and the swaying of creepers blown by the wind,
your tremulous glances.

b. From Rāma's lament upon his separation from Sītā in the OJR
ring kidang katutur ing wulat marūm

"In the deer I am reminded of your sweet and loving glances [...]"
(OJR 7.24a)

hangśa kapwa ya miběr ya tângalor
ngkāna ring talaga Mānasa n para /
wet ny uněngku harikā kuněng muni
nā swaranta ri hiḍěpku tan pahi (OJR 7.26)

The swans that are all flying north,
Their destination is far-away Lake Mānasa,
As they send out their calls, out of my longing,
I seem to hear your voice, no different at all from theirs.

Aichele (1926: 938; 1931: 178) has also called attention to the important role played by *apahnuti/nihnuti* and *utprekṣā* in the poetics of ancient Java. One of the examples he cites—OJR 6.122—is of special importance since it is here that a specialized vocabulary begins to develop around OJ expressions of the *utprekṣā*. Translators and critics of the *kakawin* may rightly puzzle over unusual uses of the cognitive verb *wruh*, "know." However, by observing that there is a tradition of incorporating phrases based on *wruh* in OJR expressions of the *utprekṣā* we can begin to understand how this cognitive verb is used to suggest the figured animacy that is so much a part of the expression of what Gerow (1971: 137) has termed the "metaphysical ascription" characteristic of the *utprekṣā*.[28] In OJR 6.122 we find a first instance of the development of an *utprekṣā* that depends in part on the low transitivity of cognitive verbs like *wruh*, and their concomitant capacity to suggest animacy through the implication of a cognitive sense that in reality is purely figural:

mwang (ng)ikang kayu kabeh paḍa mamanah
ronya yâpěs alaris ya taji tajěm /
pāngnya yeka larasanya ya malurus
wruhnya yan tuju hati-ngku kěna rujit (OJR 6.122)

"And the trees—they are all shooting their arrows,
Their straight and tender leaves are the sharp barbs (of their points),

28. The *utprekṣā* of OJR 6.122 is also significant in being part of an extended series of figures recording the lament of Sītā that is developed independently of the BK.

While their branches must be their bows, straight and true,
They know that if they aim at my heart it will be struck, utterly
smashed."

We have noted in our earlier discussion of *śabdālaṃkāra* in the OJR that verses 16.14–41 provided the poet(s) with an occasion to explore the potential of *yamaka* in support of an extended passage on the pain Rāma suffers when beholding the natural beauties of Mount Suwela and being reminded of the beauty of Sītā. In common with a second exploration of Rāma's pain in separation in OJR 6.117–28 and a similar exploration of the theme of Sītā's pain and longing in OJR 17.105–10, the verses that give voice to Rāma's suffering in OJR 16.14–41 are not found in the BK. Moreover, the series of *arthālaṃkāras* developed in this passage are at one point (verses 16.24–29) carefully interwoven with a *kañcī-yamaka* that we have discussed earlier in the context of the *śabdālaṃkāra* of the OJR, here illustrating the figure of *virodha* or *virodhābhāsa*, "(apparent) contradiction."[29]

With a brief discussion of the way that "figures of meaning" were developed in the Old Javanese tradition we conclude this brief survey of the ways in which the poets of ancient Java developed a repertoire of figures and tropes based on the possibilities of *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra* and their knowledge of the Indian figural tradition from the works of masters of *kāvya* like Kālidāsa and Bhaṭṭi. Verses like OJR 16.26 are among those that convinced Hooykaas (1957) that the OJR was "exemplary." In a later chapter in this work we will demonstrate that the character of the later figural tradition of the *kakawin* took its own direction, at times carrying forward the lessons learned during the composition of the OJR, at others leaving behind formal elements of composition like the *yamaka* in favour of a more generalized attention to the sonorous capacities of language. In this sense the OJR is "exemplary" not in the immediacy of its effects on all that followed, but in standing at the perfect point of balance between the received tradition of South Asia and the birth of Old Javanese as a "cosmopolitan vernacular" with unique expressive capacities.

The discovery of the potential of Bhaṭṭi's contribution to the art of figuration by the poet(s) of the OJR and the subsequent unfolding of the OJ tradition of lyrical verse thus provides us with a baseline for understanding the later history of the *kakawin*. At the same time it underscores the powerful drive towards innovation that must have been shared by both "local" and "translocal" players in the pedagogical and literary institutions that produced a work like the OJR. For, despite its partial dependency on the BK, the OJR is first and foremost an

29. For a transliterated text and translation of BK 16.26 see explanation given earlier.

innovative work. This could only be the case if the Indian tradition itself put a high premium on creativity, change, and innovation during the period when the canonical works of the first phase of the history of the *kāvya* made their way to the archipelago. The role of the *kāvya* in supporting the birth of a literature in the ancient archipelago must thus be counted as one of the moments in its own history of innovation and change.

Abbreviations

AW	*Arjunawiwāha* (*kakawin*)
BrP	*Brahmaṇḍapūrana* (Gonda 1932; OJ prose work)
DW	*Deśawarṇana* (= *Nagarakṛtāgama*; *kakawin*)
KK	*Kuñjarakārṇadharmakāthana* (*kakawin*)
KY	*Kṛṣṇāyana* (*kakawin*)
OJ	Old Javanese language
OJED	*Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (P.J. Zoetmulder with S.O. Robson, 1982)
TK	*Tantri Kāmandaka* (OJ prose work)
Utt	*Uttarakanda* (OJ prose work in Parwa form)

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IV

The Masters of Prose

In the middle of the first millennium a massive change occurred. The harbingers of this change were poets writing in prose: Subandhu, who probably lived in the sixth century, and Bāṇa in the seventh. Though in prose, their works are not only composed in the *kāvya* style, but redefine and expand the expressive range available to Sanskrit *kāvya* authors. Even the earliest extant treatises on poetics had recognized that *gadya* or prose poetry is one of the two main types of *kāvya* alongside *padya*, or verse poetry. By the ninth century, the poetician Vāmana had gone so far as to say, quoting what seems to have been a widespread opinion, that prose is the touchstone of a *kāvya* poet (*Kāvyālaṅkārasūtravṛtti* 1.3.21).

Anyone who reads the *gadyakāvyas* of this period will immediately notice new features of intensity: the complex syntactical effects, including sentences running for pages on end and often structured in multilayered hypotaxis, the dense patterns of figuration, including extensive use of alliteration and punning, the new musicality with its persistent exploration of the range of textures available beyond the boundaries of individual verses, and the complexities of narrative structure with their rich use of emboxed stories and variations in pace.

All of this reflects an extended moment of creative experimentation, not only with the possibilities of prose as a style, but also with the system of genres. Of the prose works of Bāṇa,

for example, one is, for the first time in Sanskrit literature, a sustained work purporting to be a biographical account of a contemporary person, and the other admittedly follows the earlier prose poem of Subandhu in presenting an elaborate work of imaginative fiction. The latter category has an intimate connection with a rich vein of literature known collectively as the Big Story, or *Bṛhatkathā*—a repository attributed to Guṇāḍhya, and traditionally described as composed in the language of the ghouls, but no longer extant in that form.

The pioneer of this new prose revolution was presumably Subandhu, although he certainly did not invent Sanskrit prose poetry from scratch. His predecessors included Buddhist texts such as the *Lalitavistara* and the elegantly crafted *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra, along with the ornate prose of the inscriptions. But as Yigal Bronner's chapter demonstrates, Subandhu took the preexisting elements at his disposal and used them to invent a distinctively new genre of Sanskrit poetry, with double meanings—often humorous or subversive—and extended euphonic compounds as the foundations of its elaborate descriptive passages. These techniques were later adopted by Bāṇa and his successors and became a kind of canonical style in their hands.

We see Bāṇa as one of the most influential and creative figures in the entire history of Sanskrit literature. In addition to establishing a durable model of Sanskrit poetic style in prose, on the basis of Subandhu's dramatic experiments, Bāṇa also introduced a new level of vigor, recognized by later poets as a kind of attractive boldness (*prāgalbhya*), even in his Sanskrit verse. His verse poetry, as well as his prose, includes distinctive attempts to expand the range of topics, forms, and approaches beyond what had been customary in the past. As Gary Tubb's chapter shows in detail, new topics (such as everyday poverty) that had previously been considered unpoetic, new metrical patterns and new techniques of connecting individual verses together in extended groups, and a new willingness to use striking phonetic and compositional tools are all in evidence in the surviving verses of Bāṇa, and are imitated later by the Pāla poets and other admirers of Bāṇa among the Sanskrit poets of northeastern India.

The geographical and political setting for this innovative moment, as always in the history of turning points in literature, deserves careful attention. Kānyakubja or Kanauj, first as the capital of Bāṇa's patron, the empire-building Harṣa, and later of several other polities in the centuries to come, was clearly a center of cosmopolitan cultural exchange, which allowed for literary cross-fertilization among poets and across linguistic boundaries and regional styles. Something similar might be said for the impact of the earlier Gupta empire in producing great poets, such as Kālidāsa; but the role of Kanauj extended over a much longer period of time and included, at least on the basis of our current evidence, a more

extensive interplay between Sanskrit and Prakrit literary practices, among other factors.

Two further chapters in this section deal specifically with Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. Herman Tiecken addresses directly the conundrum of Bāṇa's alleged demise two-thirds of the way through the work. David Shulman relates to this same problem in the context of an interpretation of the major themes of the work—for example, the question of personal identity and discontinuous memory, and two starkly differentiated models of romantic love.

In short, it is clear that the period in the middle of the first millennium was a watershed in the long history of *kāvya* literature with ramifications active for many centuries to come. The canonical history of this tradition as we see in some medieval sources and in most modern histories has missed altogether the radical nature of the changes we are describing. Wherever one looks in the literature of this period, one sees bold experimentation accompanied by the opening up of unforeseen horizons. It is possible that this was the time when innovation per se was a predominant value, driving the poets to explore ever new possibilities.

9

The Nail-Mark That Lit the Bedroom

Biography of a Compound

Yigal Bronner

A. Introduction

In this essay I set out to examine *really* long compounds in Sanskrit literature. Extensive experiments with the possibilities and potentials of nominal compounds appear in Sanskrit versified poetry from its inception and, even more so, in belletristic prose, whether inscribed in stone or found in manuscripts that started to circulate in South Asia during the first half of the first millennium CE. By the sixth century, when the *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu, the first extant Sanskrit *kāvya* work that is entirely in prose, was probably written, compounds combining ten, twenty, and even thirty words had become a fixture in *kāvya*.[1]

Surprisingly, no analytical framework exists to explain such colossal composite words. From the point of view of Sanskrit grammarians and commentators, the same basic analyses apply to all compounds regardless of their length.[2] Sanskrit literary theorists have

1. A history of early Sanskrit prose is still very much a desideratum. For prose in early inscriptions, see Sharma 1968, 8–12. For a discussion of Sanskrit works on Buddhist themes that involve prose passages, see Hahn 1977. The poetic nature of the prose in the anonymous Buddhist work the *Lalitavistara*, potentially a crucial link in the evolution of belletristic prose in Sanskrit, is one of the topics of He 2012.

2. "Most Sanskrit compounds, no matter how many words they are composed of, can be analyzed in the first instance as compounds containing two members ... In the longer compounds, of course, either or both of these members may itself be a compound

little to say about spun-out compounds other than to associate them primarily with prose and its "force" (*ojas*), and view their presence in verse as a matter of regional preference.[3] Indologists are at best highly apologetic about the plethora of such monster amalgamations in the Sanskrit canon and, with very few exceptions, have failed even to address the possibility of their having some aesthetic value.[4] Scholars working on the vastly creative mechanisms of compounding in modern languages are keenly aware of the imaginative, alliterative, and metaphoric processes involved in compounds such as "Picasso porn" ("the scrambled signal of a pornographic cable channel as seen by a nonsubscriber") or "Hogwarts

of any number of words; it is then analyzed in precisely the same way, beginning by breaking it down into two members," Tubb and Boose 2007, 85; see also their more detailed exposition of commentarial practices for analyzing long compounds, pp. 137–45. As Tiwary 1984, 11 shows, the four basic types of Pāṇini's rules for deriving compounds—those very rules that inform the commentarial analyses described by Tubb and Boose—envision a dyadic unit (*x-y*, with a morphological ending *z*) as their basic scope.

3. Proliferation of large compounds is the defining characteristic of the quality of "force" or "intensity" (*ojas*), which, according to Daṇḍin, is the very life breath (*jīvitam*) of prose, but whose use in verse is a matter of regional variance. For north-easterners, he says, compounding is a single-minded obsession even in verse (*padye 'py adākṣiṇātyānām idam ekaṃ parāyaṇam, Kāvyādarśa* 1.80), whereas southerners may or may not resort to compounding in versified poetry; when they do, adds Daṇḍin, they employ a light touch in comparison with what he views as the north easterners' heavy handedness (*Kāvyādarśa*, 1.82–84; for a good survey of *ojas* in Sanskrit poetics, see Gonda 1952, 37–44). Daṇḍin is also aware of a compounding pattern that is based on sequences of either metrically "light" (*laghu*) or "heavy" (*guru*) syllables, as well as of another that blends the two types. He notes that the latter, syllabically dissonant pattern (*uccāvacaprakāra*, 1.81) is, again, more typical of prose. Others have identified the quality of "sweetness" (*mādhurya*), which for Daṇḍin defines the southern *Vaidarbha* poetry, with a dearth of compounds (for example, *Kāvyālaṃkāra* of Bhāmaha 2.1; see also Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata 16.104, p. 482; cf. Raghavan 1978, 267–68). Aside from these broad-brush classifications, one rarely comes across any discussion of the potential psychoaesthetic effects of extended compounds: what is it that makes them inten and, perhaps, non-sweet? For one such rare occasion in Abhinavagupta's discussion of *ojas*, see what follows later.

4. Amazingly, not much has changed in the scholarly stance toward such massive compounds since Weber, when concluding his description of Bāṇa's style with a complaint about "compounds extending over more than one line," famously compared Bāṇa's prose to an "Indian wood, where all progress is rendered impossible by the undergrowth until the traveller cuts out a path for himself, and where, even then, he has to reckon with malicious wild beasts" (Weber 1853, quoted by Peterson in his introduction to the *Kādambarī*, p. 37). The work of Robert Hueckstedt marks an important breakthrough in its attempts to liberate the study of Sanskrit prose from such biases. Hueckstedt convincingly rejects what he terms the "Jungle school" approach to such works (Hueckstedt 1985, 11–17). But even Hueckstedt devotes little attention to long compounds and addresses these "malicious wild beasts" only tangentially, apropos Bāṇa's alliterative and rhythmic patterns (see Hueckstedt 1985, 131–38 and 139–48 for a discussion of sound repetitions and rhythm, respectively).

headache" ("migraine headache caused by the physical stress of reading the 870-page Harry Potter book, *The Order of the Phonenix*").[5] But they have yet to come across, let alone analyze, an unostentatious 15-member specimen. In short, it turns out that we know very little about one of the most conspicuous phenomena of Sanskrit literary culture. What happens inside and around a long Sanskrit compound? How does it work syntactically, rhythmically, and figuratively? What, if any, is its aesthetic charm?

If we are to examine really long compounds, we obviously have to look for them in the works of Sanskrit's prose masters, who, free from the metrical confines of versified poetry, fully explored their potentials. There is no better candidate for this analysis than Subandhu, the great pioneer of ornate Sanskrit prose. In his *Vāsavadattā*, which narrates the amazing story of a prince and a princess who first come together in a shared dream and then manage to locate one another in waking and pursue their love against all odds, Subandhu invents an entirely new type of literature, marked by a remarkably intricate and largely autonomous linguistic world. At the heart of Subandhu's prose is his experimentation with simultaneity (*śleṣa*).[6] But Subandhu's elegant, complex, and extended compounds are equally innovative and occupy a very prominent place in his baroque-like prose.

Taking its inspiration from A. L. Becker's "biography" of a single Burmese proverb,[7] this essay consists of a close examination of one of the many compounds found in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*. Although the sample, chosen almost randomly, is, at least in one sense, small, I argue that it gives voice to the central themes of the work of which it is a part and exemplifies some of the major socioaesthetic trajectories of *kāvya*.

The compound under discussion comes from the longest sentence in the *Vāsavadattā*, which depicts the dream wherein Kandarpaketu, the hero, first sees his beloved (whose name, Vāsavadattā, he learns only much later). The length and complexity of this 86-line-long sentence are clearly a statement about the importance of this moment in the plot; they also offer a clue about the possible interaction between the two realms Subandhu foregrounds: the imaginative/inner realm of the dreamer/lover and the intricate linguistic construct of the poet. Subandhu creates in this sentence an almost unbearable syntactic and narrative suspense. Broadly speaking, the sentence has two parts. The first dwells on the nocturnal and highly eroticized temporal setting, just at the moment when the night is reaching its end (*avasannāyāṃ yāmavatyām*). The second gradually

5. The examples and definitions are from Benczes 2006, 149, 170.

6. For an analysis of Subandhu's new prose style and the place of *śleṣa* in it, see Bronner 2010, 20–56.

7. Becker 1995.

zooms in on the physical attributes and many charms of a female object, supplying only at the very end the verb "he saw" (*apaśyat*), the object, "an eighteen-year-old girl" (*aṣṭādaśavarśadeśīyāṃ kanyām*), and, finally, the fact that all this took place in a dream (*svapne*).[8]

Our compound *du jour* (or rather, *de la nuit*) is from the sentence's first part, where the setting of the dreamer is being described. This description is divided into several clusters of clauses. It begins with the gradual and highly erotic depiction of the setting moon, itself the lover of Ms. Water Lily (*kumudinī-nāyaka*). Then it turns to a predawn murmur that begins to build up: the humming of bees, stuck inside lotuses that shut at night; the soft singing of mynah birds, a living alarm clock for those women who must now wake and rush home from the apartments of their lovers; the recitation of diligent students who rise early; and the quiet chanting of pilgrims who begin to fill the streets. Several additional clauses are dedicated to a beautiful description of the lamps as they run out of oil and die. This, then, is the darkest hour, right before the dawn, and the sentence turns to describe an important icon of this liminal moment: women who lie embraced by their partners after a long night of love. We are still only about halfway into the sentence, which has so far proceeded in adverbial clauses in absolute constructions, called locative absolutes (Sanskrit: *sati saptamī*). Many of these clauses contain or consist of long compounds.[9]

B. The Sanskrit Compound and the Problems of Translation

Here is the compound under discussion:

> *[nava]-nakha-pada-daṣṭa-keśa-pāśa-vinirmoka-vedanā-kṛta-sīt-kāra-vinirgata-dugdha-mugdha-daśana-kiraṇa-dhavalita-bhogâvāsāsu*[10]

8. *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu, pp. 28–41 (unless otherwise noted, all references to the *Vāsavadattā* are to the 1906 edition of T. V. Srinivasachariar). For a good discussion of sentence structure in the prose of Bāṇa, Subandhu's successor, see Hueckstedt 1985, 51–70. For a discussion of the structure and plot of the *Vāsavadattā*, see Bronner 2010, 25–26.

9. See *Vāsavadattā*, pp. 28–29 for descriptions of the setting moon, 29 for the description of the premorning murmur, including the hum of the bees, stuck inside the lotus (*śiśira-hima-śīkara-kardamita-kumuda-parāga-madhya-baddha-caraṇeṣu ṣaṭ-caraṇeṣu*), and 29–30 for the complex clauses describing the dying away of the lamps. The description of the women begins on page 30 and continues until page 33 (*priyair āliṅgyamānāsu kāminīṣu*).

10. *Vāsavadattā*, p. 32. The initial word, *nava*, does not appear in Srinivasachariar's edition and is adopted from Hall's 1859, 40; see also Gray 1913, 57, note 3 for reasons explained later (see note 19).

It is unclear how to render a long nominal stretch into English. We may begin by supplying a word-by-word gloss:

> fresh-nail-mark-stuck-hair-bunch-removal-ache-made-sigh-out-let-milk-charming-tooth-beam-whitened-bedroom [feminine locative plural ending]

As can be seen, just to replace the Sanskrit words with English ones, thereby creating a so-called English compound, amounts to gibberish. In an article titled "Some Problems in the Translation of Sanskrit Poetry," Daniel Ingalls discusses a similar situation he encountered when translating a verse from the *Veṇīsaṃhāra* that is dominated by two bulky compounds. Ingalls, too, first supplies a literal paraphrase of the verse and its compounds, both of which are significantly shorter than the specimen from the *Vāsavadattā*, only to note that "to adhere to the original structure will drive [one's] reader to confusion or laughter, an effect of which one must be ashamed," for the Sanskrit original "is not confusing or comical; it is clear and passionate."[11]

This problem of translation, however, is not necessarily a bad one. As Becker reminds us, "Translation for the philologist ... is not the final goal but only a first step, a necessary first step, in understanding a distant text; necessary because it opens for us the exuberances and deficiencies of our own interpretations and so helps us see what kinds of self-correction must be made."[12] Our initial "translation" certainly highlights several deficiencies dictated by the capacities of the target language. To begin with, every compound elides syntactic information that the listener or reader is expected to restore and process instantly. Take, for example, the initial part of the earlier gloss—"fresh-nail-mark-stuck-hair"—where the fact that the hair is stuck *on* the fresh nail-mark*s* (the supplied morpheme and preposition are italicized) is not explicitly stated and has to be understood. But it is clear that English readers do not have the habit of cognizing syntactic information in a compound longer than four or five words at most, and that part of the gibberish-like feel of the English nominal amalgamation is that after the first few items it begins to read like a long list of unrelated words. A Sanskrit reader, by contrast, can be trusted to stomach this long, demorphologized nominal sequence whole and cognize the words' syntactic relations despite the fact that much more linguistic matter is actually dropped in Sanskrit, given its intricate system of endings for marking the case, number, and gender of each independent noun. If an English reader is to digest it, the Sanskrit compound

11. Ingalls 1982, 126.

12. Becker 1995, 185–86. Ingalls too, uses the difficulty in translation as the starting point of his short but illuminating discussion of the aesthetic effects of the original.

must first be chopped into its constitutive elements, and each must be served with its own syntactic dressing.

Even worse, our strange "English" compound awkwardly replicates the left-branching structure of the original. Again, this is possible in English only in short compounds (for example, "homemade," for something that is made at home, and snow-white, for someone who is white like snow) and sounds jarring in anything that is more than one or two words longer. Subandhu's compound, by contrast, has a staggeringly complex left-branching structure. "Bedroom" (*bhogâvāsāsu*, literally "pleasure room"), in itself a small compound that stands at the rightmost end of the larger compound, is a head noun that governs a series of subordinated and boxed modifiers. Thus, a translation informed by English syntactic sensibilities will not only lead to chopping up the compound; it will also have to reverse its directionality and follow the logic of its embedded structure by starting from the end and proceeding backward.

Our initial difficulties in translating the compound thus force us to sketch the syntax of Subandhu's elegant and seamless nominal flow. Here is such a rendering of the compound that starts at the end and supplies the missing syntactic information in twelve basic steps:

1. "Bedroom" is modified by the participle "whitened."
2. This participle, in turn, has as its agent a light "beam."
3. "Beam," or "beams," has "tooth," which stands for "teeth," as its source.
4. "Beams" also seems to govern the adjective "charming," which, in turn, is modified by a comparison to "milk," implying that the beams are milk-white.
5. "Beams" is likewise modified by the participle "out-let," or discharged (in the sense of being outwardly projected).[13]
6. "Out-let," for its part, is modified by its cause or source, a "sigh."
7. "Sigh" governs the participle "made," modified, in turn, by its agent, "ache."
8. "Ache" is specified as resulting from a "removal," or release.
9. "Removal" governs its object, a "bunch" of "hair."
10. "Hair" is modified as "stuck."

13. As T. V. Srinivasachariar notes: *vinirgatāḥ bahir nissṛtāḥ dugdhavat kṣīravat dhavalāḥ śubhrāḥ ye daśanakiraṇāh dantāṃśavaḥ taiḥ dhavalitāḥ* (*Vāsavadattā*, p. 32; the commentator chose not to apply *sandhi* rules to his gloss). Srinivasachariar is in agreement with Śivarāma Tripaṭhin's older gloss (which follows a slightly variant reading): *vinirgatābhir dugdhamugdhadaśanakiraṇ-acchaṭābhir* (Hall, p. 51). Another possible analysis is to take the participle "out-let" (*vinirgata*) in the sense "exposed" or "revealed," thereby modifying not "beams" but "teeth," the beams' source. This, as we shall see later, is how Louis Gray translated the compound. Gray also understood the comparison to milk as modifying the teeth rather than the light beams they project. Such syntactic ambiguities may seem inevitable, but for the Sanskrit reader they are rare, especially considering the enormousness of such compounds.

11. The participle "stuck" is modified by its locus: the hair is stuck onto a "nail-mark" (which, as we have already noted, stands for a plurality of nail-marks), another small compound with which our backward journey almost ends.
12. But if we assume that the reading *nava* is correct, the minicompound "nail-mark" is itself modified as "fresh" or "new."

Even this detailed syntactic analysis is partial because "bedroom" is not the real head noun, since the compound as a whole is exocentric. In other words, this vast left-branching compound is only an adjective modifying a noun that appears much further to the right: "lovers [feminine]" (*kāminīṣu*). The compound, then, is not about whitened bedrooms, but about women-in-love who have their rooms whitened.[14]

Louis Gray's 1913 translation of the *Vāsavadattā* reflects this syntactic analysis. Indeed, his translation of the sentence proceeds backward, or rightward, in more than one way: the dream's female object is spelled out before the description that precedes it, the head noun of the adverbial absolute clauses (women-lovers) is given before the exocentric compounds that modify it, and each compound, including our specimen, is translated from end to beginning, as can be seen below:

> When damsels ... illuminated their apartments by the light of the rays of their milk-white teeth, revealed through their sobbing at the pain caused by the loosening of the hair which adhered to the fresh nail-marks.[15]

Gray's translation is obviously not particularly elegant, and I discuss one of its problematic lexical choices later. But the point is not to criticize previous translators, but to further the Beckerian investigation into our own "exuberances and deficiencies" in order to deepen our understanding of Subandhu's compound. Recall that our first attempt merely to replace the Sanskrit words with English equivalents, using the original word order, resulted in gibberish. Gray's translation,

14. One of the first modern linguists to distinguish between exocentric and endocentric compounds was Bloomfield (1933, 235), who acknowledges the inspiration of Sanskrit grammarians in this and other conceptualizations of compounds, and the nature and value of this distinction have been debated ever since (for a good summary with a focus on the English language, see Benczes 2006, 15–39). An even earlier use of this terminology is found in Aleksandrov 1888, 110 (I am grateful to Victor D'Avella for this reference). For Sanskrit traditional grammarians, of course, this distinction is old. The Sanskrit term for an exocentric compound is *bahuvrīhi* or much-rice, which is also an example of its kind, as the compound modifies a rich man.

15. Gray 1913, 57.

by contrast, follows the logic of the compound's embedded syntax in a way that at least makes sense to English readers. Of course, the exposition proceeds by way of undoing this very syntax and replacing it with rightward devices, such as the relative clause ("hair which adhered"), because the English language has a hard time flexing itself leftward. The main problem with this procedure, aside from its inherent clumsiness, is that it violates the forward-moving (left-to-right) temporal logic of the compound's chain of events, wherein the result of one action is the immediate cause of the next. Six such actions are referred to in the compound:

1. [Implied]: the night's lovemaking left fresh nail-marks on the women's breasts.
2. Wet wounds from the lover's nails cause the women's hair to stick to them.
3. Removal of the stuck hair causes pain.
4. Pain causes sighing.
5. Sighing causes the milk-white rays of the teeth to emanate.
6. The rays wash the bedrooms white.

As Gray's translation indicates, precisely because of its failure to capture it, the power of the compound rests partly on this constant forward flow of causes and effects. The seminal thinker Abhinavagupta made a similar observation when he was commenting on a compound from the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, the difficulties in translating which are the topic of Ingalls's aforementioned discussion. This compound depicts Bhīma's vow to wash Draupadī's hair in the blood gushing from Suyodhana's thighs after he, Bhīma, crushes them with his club. Abhinavagupta notes: "From the long compound, flowing in an uninterrupted stream and allowing the hearer no pause in all its course, there results an apprehension of the whole scene as a unity up to the presentation of the broken-thighed Suyodhana. This serves to intensify the impression of Bhīma's violence."[16]

Abhinavagupta's perceptive comment can be taken as a pioneering attempt to spell out what is actually forceful about the poetic quality of "force" (*ojas*), which consists, as previous writers have noted, of the dominant presence of large compounds in prose and occasionally in verse. For Abhinavagupta, the uninterrupted flow of fierce acts within the boundaries of one long compound is its force because it powerfully underscores the overall dramatic nature of Bhīma's violent undertaking. For Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, moreover, only poetry dominated by wrath (*raudra*), bravery (*vīra*), or adventure (*adbhūta*)

16. *samāsena ca santatavegavahanasvabhāvāt tāvaty eva madhye viśrāntim alabhamānā cūrṇitorudvayasuyodhanānādaraṇaparyantā pratīter ekatvenaiva bhavatīty audhatyasya paraṃ paripoṣikā* (translation by Ingalls 1982, 126). The compound under discussion is *cañcad-bhuja-bhramita-caṇḍa-gadâbhighāta-sañcūrṇitôru-yugalasya* (*Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana, pp. 210–11).

seems to have "force," whereas love (*śṛṅgāra*) is typified by "sweetness" (*mādhurya*), a quality often defined by the lack of long compounds, at least in verse. It should be remembered, however, that these thinkers are not proposing anything like a detailed theory of poetic qualities; all they wish to do is to appropriate this older concept into their thesis about the dominance of suggestion of emotional "flavors" (*rasa*s) in poetry. Hence they briefly demonstrate that qualities like "force" and "sweetness" are subordinated to emotional flavors, such as "wrath" and "love," respectively, or, indeed, that they are qualities of these *rasas*.[17]

Thus one wonders if Abhinavagupta's insight about the nominal stretch from the *Veṇīsaṃhāra* might not also apply to the compound from the *Vāsavadattā*, despite their obvious differences in formal context (one is part of a verse, the other is in prose), emotional flavor (wrath, eros), and content (each delineates a very different sequence of actions). This is because Subandhu's compound, just like the one from the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, if not more so, allows the hearer no pause in its course and results in the apprehension of the unity of its drama, delicate and small scale though it may be. The unfolding of this unbroken chain of sticking-removing-aching-sighing-radiating-whitewashing on the intimate stage of the bodies of these women and their bedrooms, while certainly savory, has its own kind of tight orchestration and, indeed, force or intensity. But we can access this force only if we read (or translate) the text in its original order, from beginning to end.

To conclude: the long suspenseful compound—part of an even longer adverbial clause that itself is part of a massive sentence—is constituted by a tension between two basic organizing logics or linearities: the forceful, forward succession of acts on the axis of time and causality, and the complex backward arching of a subordinated, embedded syntax. Although the two can somehow coexist in Sanskrit, any rendering into English, even aside from the question of its intelligibility, necessarily forces us to sacrifice one of them. Indeed, as it turns out, much more is lost in translation.

C. Score and Structure

Although the seemingly incessant flow of Subandhu's compound is unmarked by morphological case endings, it is annotated by its musicality. This may surprise those who tend to associate tune and melody with the rich and rhythmic

17. For Ānandavardhana's and Abhinavagupta's discussion, see *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana, pp. 204–13. See also Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan 1990, 250–60; and McCrea 2008, 156–64.

patterns of Sanskrit prosody. But despite not being metrically structured, or precisely because of this fact, Subandhu's prose has its own rich musical texture, pleasing to the trained ear. I should say that the complex arrangement of the *Vāsavadattā* as a whole includes duets and solos, harmonies and cacophonies, pianos and fortes, and pauses as well as crescendos, all of which are beyond the scope of this discussion. But as it turns out, our compound, too, has its own miniscore. To begin with, note the basic echoes that reverberate as it unfolds: the first three words (*nava-nakha-pada*) present six identical vowels (*aa-aa-aa*) and a nasal initial rhyme in its first pair of words (*na ... na*). The next triplet of words (*daṣṭa-keśa-pāśa*) displays a consistent alliteration of sibilant sounds (*ṣ ... ś ... ś*) and final rhyme on the final pair of words (*śa ... śa*). This is followed by resonance of initial labial sounds (*vi ... ve*) in the pair *vinirmoka-vedanā*, an alliteration that is importantly carried over to the initial *vi* of *vinirgata*, several words down. In the next phonetic junction (*kṛta-sītkāra*), one cannot miss another reverberating pair: *kṛ ... kār*. This is immediately followed by the perfect end rhymes—*ugdha ... ugdha* and *ana ... aṇa*—of the following two pairs of words, *dugdha-mugdha* and *daśana-kiraṇa*, and by the resonance *ava ... āvā* in *dhavalita-bhogâvāsāsu* as the compound comes to an end.

The compound's score becomes even clearer when the pattern of "light" (*laghu*, marked below by the letter *l*) and "heavy" (*guru*, marked by a *g*) syllables, the two basic values of Sanskrit metrics, is mapped out.[18] It immediately becomes clear that what we are facing is much more than a pleasing set of rhymes and echoes, and that the seemingly amorphous compound is carefully divided into smaller units of two, three, or four words. Each such unit contains not only a distinct rhyme or alliteration among its member words, typically of similar length, but also a unique metrical pattern. Think, for example, of the first triplet of words (*nava-nakha-pada*) that follows an identical pattern of *ll-ll-ll*, the second triplet (*daṣṭa-keśa-pāśa*) with its symmetrical structure of *gl-gl-gl*, and the pairs *dugdha-mugdha* (*gl-gl*) and *daśana-kiraṇa* (*lll-lll*), all of which show perfect rhythmic harmony between their members. Signaling the end of the compound is a very different pair, *dhavalita-bhogâvāsāsu*, which stands out for the cacophony of its constituting members. It consists of four light syllables in a row followed by four consecutive heavy ones (*llll-gggg*) before the last light vowel *su* provides the necessary morphological ending, which ties this compound to its larger absolute structure and provides a much-needed breather for the reader/reciter.

18. For an initial discussion of the possible importance of such metrical values in prose, see Hueckstedt's attention to what he sees as an overall preference for sequences of light syllables in Bāṇa and Subandhu (Hueckstedt 1985, 139–48). For Daṇḍin's reference to metrical harmony and disharmony in prose, see note 3.

The main exception to this otherwise regular succession of euphonically and metrically distinct units of two or three words occurs at the very center of the compound. Here the words are arranged in a more complicated chiastic structure. The nearly identical pair *vinirmoka ... vinirgata*, with its extended initial rhyme (*vinir ... vinir*), nearly identical set of vowels (*iioa ... iiaa*), and a similar metrical pattern (*lggl ... lgll*) flanks this chiasmus from both ends. Couched in between are the words *vedanā-kṛta-sīt-kāra*, which, technically speaking, are two mini-compounds, the second word of each of which is derived from the same verbal root, *kṛ* ("to do"). In addition to the obvious reverberation between *kṛta* and *kāra* that has already been mentioned, this innermost part of the compound offers an almost palindromic metrical pattern that augments the sense of a chiasmus if it is taken as a single unit that is not parsed into words: *gl gllg gl*.

Here, then, is an analysis of the compound that follows its seven basic musical building blocks, as determined by alliteration, initial or end rhyme, vowel harmony, metrical/syllabic pattern, and, in most cases, a combination of all these elements:

(Unit 1) *nava-nakha-pada*: three words made of six identical vowels (*a-a-a-a-a-a*), with an initial rhyme in the first two members (*na ... na*) and an identical syllabic pattern (*ll-ll-ll*).[19]

(Unit 2) *daṣṭa-keśa-pāśa*: three words with a repeated alliteration of sibilant sounds (*ṣ, ś, ś*), an end rhyme on the last two members (*śa ... śa*), and their own repeated metrical pattern (*gl-gl-gl*).

(Unit 3) *vinirmoka ... vinirgata*: two words that flank the center of the compound and parallel each other with their extended initial rhyme (*vinir ... vinir*), near-perfect vowel harmony (*iioa-iiaa*), and very similar metrical design (*lggl-lgll*).

(Unit 4) *vedanā-kṛta-sīt-kāra*: the inner duo, consisting of two smaller compounds, each of which ends with the echoing *kṛ* derivation (*kṛta ... kāra*). The inner part as a whole has a near-palindromic metrical pattern (*gl gllg gl*).

(Unit 5) *dugdha-mugdha*: two words that have an extended end rhyme (*ugdha ... ugdha*), perfect vowel harmony (*ua-ua*), and a symmetrical syllabic design (*gl-gl*).

19. It is primarily on the basis of the coherence of this unit and its perfect parallel with the following one that I prefer Hall's reading, with *nava* as the first word of the compound, which allows it to begin with two units of word triplets, strengthens the alliteration with an initial nasal rhyme, and fits the metrical pattern and vowel harmony.

(Unit 6) *daśana-kiraṇa*: a pair of words with an end rhyme (*ana ... aṇa*), a near-perfect vowel harmony (*aaa-iaa*), and a mirroring metrical design (*lll-lll*).

(Unit 7) *dhavalita-bhogâvāsāsu*: the final two words are paired by their labial repetition, on the one hand (*ava ... āvā*), and their complete metrical dissonance (*llll-gggg*), on the other, before the final light syllable that is the compound's morphological ending.

The full effect of this careful orchestration is revealed only when it is plotted on to the compound's logical/temporal and syntactic axes. The opening two units each introduce one of two actors who initiate the drama: the nail-marks (unit 1) and the hair that adheres to them (unit 2). Closer to the end, units 5 and 6 introduce another pair of actors who bring the action to a conclusion: the teeth and their radiant beams. Note, however, the variation in pattern: whereas units 1 and 2 each present a single entity (mark, hair) placed as the head noun of a minicompound, unit 6 combines both teeth and beams into a two-word compound that, in turn, syntactically governs the dyad that constitutes unit 5 (*dugdha-mugdha*) and even the last member of unit 3 (*vinirgata*). It is as if the extended sequence of words modifying the long streaks of light (*vinirgata-dugdha-mugdha-daśana-kiraṇa*) stands as an icon for what it describes.

Moreover, the overall musical arrangement reveals a contrast between the straightforward harmonies of its beginning (units 1 and 2), where the initial bodily drama of nail wounds and hair unfolds, and the cacophonous crescendo at the end (unit 7), where the external setting of the bedroom is depicted as dramatically lit. More accurately, the ear detects a clear fluctuation between the melodious harmonies of units 1 and 2 (marks, hair), as well as 5 and 6 (teeth and their beams), and the more complex arrangements in the innermost (units 3 and 4) and outermost (unit 7) parts of the compound, which also happen to correspond to the women's interiors (where pain is felt and translated into a sigh) and their exterior surroundings (lit bedrooms). The correspondence between both types of interiors and exteriors adds another dimension to the compound's iconicity, and the unique chiastic structure certainly calls attention to what is flanked by the two nearly identical twins of unit 3 (*vinirmoka* and *vinirgata*) as its nexus.

One is even tempted to think of a further iconicity in the actual phonetic makeup of the stretch at the compound's core. The labial sounds enveloping it on both sides (*vi ... ve* to the left and *vi*, again, to the right) may be thought of as representing the women's parting lips, and the enclosed dental sounds—the *s* and *t* of *sīt*—as standing for their teeth at the crucial moment when they are momentarily revealed. Thus, the crux of the compound may be seen as an icon

of a woman's mouth. This may seem far-fetched until we recall that *sīt-kāra* does not so much *denote* a "sigh" as it *reproduces* it audibly. It does not seem to be a coincidence that this centermost note in the compound's score is a verbal icon of its referent. Indeed, Subandhu is extremely fond of using a variety of sound bites, onomatopoeia, and echo words. Typically, these are employed in compounds that focus on the acoustics of the environment, such as the humming of bees, the chirping of birds, or the cracking of bones and skulls in the cremation ground through which Kandarpaketu and Vāsavadattā elope. In such cases, as I show elsewhere, the effect of the compound is to reproduce and enrich the sonorous or dreadful qualities of the setting.[20]

Here, however, although the compound's complex arrangement, with its centrally located sound bite of a sigh, certainly creates a marvelous musicality, it is not necessarily meant to amplify the soundtrack of the bedroom. Indeed, it is more about light than it is about sound, or, more accurately, it is about the mysterious internal transformation of pain to sound and sound to light. The musical arrangement accentuates the different actors and acts in this process—one can think of the musical units as compensating for the syntactic information lost when the words enter the compound—and intersects in surprising ways with the compound's two basic verticalities, which are suddenly revealed as more nuanced and complex than they initially seemed. This is particularly evident in the chiasmic structure at the heart of the compound. In the logical flow of actions, the crosswise musical arrangement highlights a nexus where a sensory input (*vinirmoka-vedanā*) is received and from which a luminous output (*vinirgata ... kiraṇa*) is generated, and where the transformation takes place: note the density of derivations of the verb "to do" (*kṛta, kāra*) at the core of the chiasmus. In terms of syntax, the two *vinir* words of unit 3 make up a crosswise structure that complements this logical flow because each points in a different direction. The former word and source of the input, *vinirmoka* (removal), is a verbal noun that governs an object to its left (a bunch of hair), and the latter, *vinirgata* (out-let, or output) is an adjective governed by a noun to its right (beams).

The following working "translation" tries to replicate something of the original's rhythmic structure:

> New nail lunules had hair adhered to them, then
> separated, a pain-turned-sss-sound radiated
> a snow-white tooth-light that milk-washed the walls
> of their bedrooms.

20. Bronner 2010, 33–38.

Thus the well-crafted musical pattern of the compound, hardly replicable in English, underscores its complex structure and surprising iconicity and provides us with the first clues about an all-important transformation that takes place in its epicenter. To understand this transformation and its wider "ecological" impact further, we will rest our compound for a while and embark on a short detour.

D. Sanskrit Compounds and the Ecosystem of Love

Kāvya has a penchant for what we may call, for lack of a better term, ecological flowcharts. To illustrate what I mean by this, it may be useful to start with an example from a poet who belongs to a different tradition, Theodor S. Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss. Here is an extract from one of his lesser-known works, *Scrambled Egg Super!*:

> I went for the kind that were mellow and sweet
> And the world's sweetest eggs are the eggs of the Kweet
> Which is due to those very sweet trout which they eat
> And those trout ... well, *they're* sweet 'cause they only eat Wogs
> And Wogs, after all, are the world's sweetest frogs
> And the reason *they're* sweet is, whenever they lunch
> It's always the world's sweetest bees that they munch
> And the reason no bees can be sweeter than these...
> *They* only eat blossoms off Beezlenut Trees
> And these Beezlenut Blossoms are sweeter than sweet
> And that's why I nabbed several eggs from the Kweet.[21]

I cannot think of a Sanskrit poem that is quite like Dr. Seuss's, but there are, nonetheless, some noteworthy commonalities between his verse and *kāvya*.[22] One has to do with what I call "*kāvya*'s law of sweetness," which states that, as with the Kweet, produced sweetness always results from consumed sweetness.

21. Seuss 1953, pages not numbered.

22. Although many works have been dedicated to the thematic, rhetorical, pedagogical, and political agendas of Dr. Seuss, as well as to his illustrations, the study of his poetry has lagged behind (as noted in Nel 2004, 11–14; for a recent example, see Lange 2009). For a basic study of Seuss's poetics that includes rhythm, suspense, rhyme, and his use of nonsense language, among other features, see Nel 2004, 15–38. I have not yet come across a full-scale analysis of Seussian alliteration, let alone his use of relative clauses and, indeed, his penchant for compounding and chiastic structures.

Consider, for example, a succinct formulation of this law in a poem from Govardhana's famous collection, the *Āryāsaptaśatī*:

āsvādita-dayitâdhara-sudhā-rasâsyaiva sūktayo madhurāḥ |
akalita-rasāla-mukulo na kokilaḥ kalam udañcayati ||

Sweet are the words of him who has sipped
elixir straight from his lover's lip.
Without getting drunk on the mango shoot,
a cuckoo can't coo its melodious coo.[23]

A verse is savory if and only if the poet has first savored love. Govardhana supports this positive statement about the human realm with a negative assertion concerning the natural world of mangoes and cuckoos. The structures of both of the verse's lines, providing the positive (*anvaya*) and negative (*vyatireka*) formulations of this law, are, however, almost identical. Each line begins with a compound depicting a sweet substance: savored elixir from the lover's lip and an (un)munched mango blossom. Halfway into each line, the reader realizes that both compounds are exocentric: they are not about the sweet substances themselves but about those who relish them. The entity modified by the first compound, the poet, is only implied, whereas the head noun modified by the second, the cuckoo, is spelled out immediately to its left. But both these entities are located, whether implicitly or explicitly, at the center of their respective lines. Finally, both lines end by depicting the sweet output of poetry and cooing respectively. Note also that each line is tied together by a pattern of sound repetition that validates the law it formulates, in the sense that the words depicting the sweet output echo those depicting the savory input (for example, *madhura* and *adhara, kalam* and *kalita*). It should be noted that there is also a verbal echo that ties both halves of the poem together: the all-important word *rasa*, which means "sap," "flavor," and also the "emotional flavor" for which poetry is savored, is mentioned in the first line and is reiterated in the second as part of the word conveying "mango" (*rasāla*). Obviously, Govardhana's perfectly structured "law of sweetness" gives voice to a fundamental aesthetic notion of his literary tradition, according to which an emotional transformation on the part of the poet (or character) is what enables the reader to relish his or her poetry.[24]

23. *Āryāsaptaśatī* of Govardhana 1.49. For a recent discussion of the *Āryāsaptaśatī* and its context, see Knutson 2009, 77–114, where this verse is mentioned apropos the question of the social experience underlying poetry (p. 89).

24. This aesthetic transformation can be explained most straight forwardly in cases where the initial experience is sweet, as with love, although the hegemonic poetic theory insists that good poetry is by definition savoury, even if the underlying emotion is not. A case in point is the story describing the composition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the tradition's primordial poem (*ādikāvya*), once its

Subandhu's long exocentric compounds often share a basic structural affinity with Govardhana's lines in that they tend to begin with some outside influence on one or more entity and end, through a chain of "ecological" reactions, in its impact on the outside environment. Moreover, the transformation that these compounds depict typically involves sweet substances and the way their savoriness is reproduced and even perpetuated. And, as we have already seen, Subandhu's compounds, too, are tied by a musical pattern, even if it is much richer and far more complicated than in Govardhana's poem. Consider a relatively simple example from the *Vāsavadattā*, where Kandarpaketu, in his search for the girl from his dream, overhears a parrot that happens to be describing Vāsavadattā and, in this case, the advent of spring in her hometown:

> *komala-malaya-mārutôddhūta-cūta-prasava-rasâsvāda-kaṣāya-kaṇṭha-kala-kaṇṭha-kuha-kuhârāva-bharita-sakala-diṅ-mukhaḥ* (*Vāsavadattā*, p. 83)

Here the soft southern breeze (*komala-malaya-māruta*), known for its intoxicating sandalwood scent, mobilizes the world of love. It shakes the mango trees (*uddhūta-cūta*), whose flowers then flow with sap (*prasava-rasa*). Feasting on this nectar, the cuckoos burst into a frenzy of intoxicated sweet coos (*āsvāda-kaṣāya-kaṇṭha-kala-kaṇṭha-kuha-kuhârāva*), which fills every corner of the heavens (*bharita-sakala-diṅ-mukhaḥ*). As in the compound on which this essay focuses, here too Subandhu begins by describing two external actors, the wind and the mango tree, coming into contact, and ends with a much longer description of an output, the perfervid but pleasant melody of cuckoos. And as we have come to expect, Subandhu crafts a tightly constructed system of echoes, rhymes, and metrical patterns (for example, *mala ... mala, ūta ... ūta, kaṇṭha ... kaṇṭha, kuha-kuha*),[25] which also highlights the existence of a center (*rasa ... rasa*), where the sweet substance of love is consumed and from which it is reproduced with even greater intensity.

author, Vālmīki, had experienced great sadness (*śoka*) and was surprised to hear himself translate it into perfect verse (*śloka*; the locus classicus for this discussion is *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana, pp. 529–30; see also Tubb 1991 and McCrea 2008, 110–11). This story notwithstanding, it is indicative that the tradition formulated a "law of sweetness," as in the poem of Govardhana, but never required poets writing on heroic deeds to be veterans of war. Indeed, it is interesting that Vālmīki's experience of sadness is based on his observation of a tragedy of strangers (in his case, a pair of krauñca birds); to write about love, however, one has to experience it firsthand.

25. Or *ku-hū*, which is what Hall (p. 131) and Krishnamachariar (pp. 153–54) read instead of *kuha-kuha*.

Clearly, this compound complies with the law of sweetness that Govardhana so succinctly formulates, even though the chain of events it depicts is more intricate: as in Dr. Seuss's poem, with its charming sound effects, Subandhu is interested here not in one transformation but in a chain leading from wind to mangoes to sap to cuckoos and finally to sounds that fill all the corners of the compass. But unlike Dr. Seuss's poem, Subandhu's compounds never come full circle. Subandhu, in other words, is less interested in explaining why the eggs of the Kweet are sweet than in the psychoaesthetic impact of sweetness: the transformation the whole world can undergo, once it is properly triggered.

Consider an even more complicated example in a longer compound describing the river Revā, which Kandarpaketu reaches in his seemingly pointless search for the girl he has dreamt about:

> *sa-mada[-kala]-kala-haṃsa-sārasa-rasitôdbhrānta-bhākūṭa-vikaṭa-kuñja-kaccha-vyādhūta-kamala-ṣaṇḍa-galita-makaranda-bindu-sandoha-surabhita-salilayā*[26]

This time Subandhu begins with birdsong and ends with flower sap. The frenzied, resonant trill of the geese (*sa-mada-kala-kala-haṃsa*) and the passionate crane-cry (*sārasa-rasita*) are the agents that set the world in motion. They startle (*udbhrānta*) schools of *bhākūṭa* fish, who, in their tumult, hit against clusters of lotuses (*vyādhūta-kamala-ṣaṇḍa*) with the huge fins of their chins (*vikaṭa-kuñja-kaccha*),[27] causing a honey spill that is massive enough to perfume the water (*surabhita-salilayā*) of one of India's major rivers.

I will not dwell on the carefully structured mellifluousness of this compound, the mimetic capacities of its phonology, and the recurrence of Subandhu's trademark echo-word *kalakala* ("murmur") in it.[28] Instead, I would like to point out that we are dealing here with a somewhat different chain of events than the simple model of reproducing consumed sweetness, as in Dr. Seuss, and even the

26. *Vāsavadattā*, p. 57. The second *kala* is supplied from Hall (p. 95). I read *bhākūṭa* with Krishnamachariar (p. 109) and Hall (*bhākūṭha*, p. 95) because I cannot find a dictionary that supports Srinivasachariar's understanding of *utkuṭa* as a type of a fish.

27. If this is what *kaccha* actually means. Alternative readings include *kūrcca* ("whiskers") in Krishnamachariar's edition (p. 109) and *puccha* ("tails") in Hall's (p. 95). With regard to fish anatomy, the redactors of Subandhu's text were not on the same page.

28. Consider, for example, the splashy, velar sounds (*kuñja-kaccha*) that depict and mimic the movements of fish in the water, or the combination *makaranda-bindu-sandoha* ("mass of honey drops"), with its repeated *nd* consonant cluster, perhaps imitating the sound of honey dripping (or the word for drop, *bindu*), which recurs elsewhere in the *Vāsavadattā*'s descriptions of honey. As for *kalakala*, it is hidden between the adjectives *sa-mada-kala* ("passionate and melodious") and the noun *kala-haṃsa* ("gander"), if we follow Hall's reading of an extra *kala*.

more complicated transformation of relish into sounds that are a feast to the ears, as in Govardhana's poem. Rather, it is density and wild frenzy that seem to govern the all-encompassing ecosystem of love as it is portrayed in this compound and that enable its continued generation of sweet ecstasy: birds are absolutely mad with excitement; their cries are so fervent that they cannot but set the fish in motion, even though they are submerged in the water; and the fish can hardly move without ramming into lotuses that are ready to explode with sweet sap. The compound itself teems with words for flora, fauna, and their actions, thereby augmenting the sense of density it depicts. Despite what literary theorists seem to imply, force or intensity (*ojas*) and sweetness (*mādhurya*) not only coexist in Subandhu's compounds that depict love, but also seem to depend on each other. Indeed, the fact that in this case it is intense frenzy that produces a sweet substance by no means precludes the reverse transformation. We have every reason to believe that the sap seasoning the Revā's water will be consumed to create further frenzy,[29] just as we can assume that the initial avian cries resulted from the birds' getting drunk on some other sweet substance. The compound's vocabulary, in fact, substantiates the latter assumption: *mada*, which modifies the pleasant singing of the ganders, literally means "intoxication," not to mention the unmistakable echo of *rasa* in *sārasa-rasita* ("crane-cry"), quite possibly alluding to the flavor they consumed and reproduced.

As Subandhu portrays it, love has an amazing capacity to reproduce itself and repeatedly trigger a dense ecosystem of flora and fauna, substances and sounds, tastes and scents. This erotic transformation, which spreads in ever-widening circles, is what many of Subandhu's compounds are all about. What remains to be explained is the relationship between the natural world of cuckoos, mangoes, cranes, fishes, and lotuses and the human agents who also inhabit it, such as the women who bathe in the scented water of the Revā, or Vāsavadattā herself, who suffers tremendously during springtime and may die unless she is united with the man of her dreams. This concern with the role of human, and particularly female, agents brings me back to the compound whose biography I set out to plot.

E. Center and Periphery: Female Subjects and the Forces of Nature

I began this essay with a compound that depicts women lying in the arms of their lovers after a night of love, one that portrays them as the nexus of a mysterious alchemical reaction wherein light is produced from nail wounds.

29. Indeed, the very next compound portrays the river's fluids as "drunk up" by the deep navels of the women of the hunter-king, taking their evening bath, presumably as a prelude to a night of love: *sāyantana-samaya-majjat-pulinda-rāja-sundarī-nimna-nābhi-maṇḍala-paripīta-salilayā* (*Vāsavadattā*, p. 57).

I discussed at some length the compound's logical flow, syntax, musical structure, and iconicity. Using different compounds as additional examples, I then described some of the more general principles of Subandhu's erotic ecosystem. I now wish to return to the original compound and argue that it, too, epitomizes the same principles in that it depicts mechanisms for the regeneration of passion, involves a similar mixture of intensity and sweetness, and leads to a commensurate impact on the world. This argument may seem strange, given the obvious differences between the compound describing the women, on the one hand, and those depicting springtime and the river Revā, on the other. After all, the former focuses on the aftermath of love on the micro level of women's bodies and in the intimacy of their chambers, whereas the latter depict an erotic frenzy that is conducive to love on the largest possible canvas and with worldwide reverberations. To realize the close affinities that the compound depicting the women nonetheless shares with these other examples, it may be useful to remember its immediate context.

As I noted earlier, this compound is part of a larger adverbial clause that provides the timeframe for Kandarpaketu's dreamwork. As I also noted, our compound comes at the darkest hour, after the moon has sunk in the ocean and the lamps have died, and right before the break of dawn. What I suggest here is that this temporal context is meaningful, and that our compound, in fact, describes the appearance of a daylight whose rays do not emanate from the sun, as one would perhaps have expected, but from within the women themselves. Support for this strange hypothesis comes from the surrounding clauses and compounds, where human love is said to be the force underlying the movement of the planets and other laws of nature.

For example, it turns out that the lamps die away not because they exhaust their oil or wicks but out of sheer exhaustion, resulting from the hundred times they raised their "necks" upward in hopes of catching a glimpse of the women's intense lovemaking (*kāminī-nidhuvana-lolā-darśanârtham ivôdgrīvikā-śata-dāna-khinneṣu*, p. 29). This is, of course, a conceit (*utprekṣā*), and Subandhu augments it by the necessary "as if" (*iva*), but there is no reason to believe that the imagined attribution of human motivations to the lamps, let alone the centrality of the women's lovemaking in this poetic universe, are not, in some deep way, real. Indeed, later in the same sentence, Subandhu drops his "as ifs" when he describes the morning breeze as actually supplying itself on flower pollen from the blossoms found in the women's hair. Moreover, these women's anklet pearls need not count on the wind to rattle them, because they jingle with the constant jolting of sex, so that it may well be that the female subjects provide the morning wind not only with its pleasant flower fragrance but also with its murmur, which is beautifully captured by the reverberating clauses that depict it

(*āndolita-kusuma-kesare kesa-reṇu-muṣi rati-raṇita-nūpura-maṇīnāṃ ramaṇīnām ... mārute vahati*, p. 33). Or consider another example from the same long sentence, when Kandarpaketu sees Vāsavadattā for the first time. Her eyes whitewash not just the bedrooms but the whole wide world in a flood of light so strong that it is compared to that of a thousand milky oceans (*dhavalayatêva jagad akhilam ... dugdhâmbodhi-sahasrāṇîvôdvamatā ... nayana-yugalena*, pp. 37–38). Could it be a mere coincidence that this flood of light corresponds with the final completion of dayspring, outside the dreamer's dream, just as the light coming from the mouths of the resting women corresponded with the first crack of dawn?

Many similar examples can easily be added from other portions of Subandhu's work. I am not suggesting, however, that it is always the case that women set sunlight, moonset, and wind in motion in the *Vāsavadattā*. These and other forces of nature do, in turn, affect the female subjects by reigniting their passion or by soothing their bodies after love, thus allowing them to experience it again. Indeed, we find here the same reciprocity that we saw governing the relationship between birds and flower honey. But it is crucial to realize that this is not reciprocity between equals. Women are unmistakably the core of this ecosystem and the prime generators of eros, whereas everything else, from the cuckoo's song to the planets, is its periphery. Love originates from within female subjects, and the deeper its source, the more powerful the eruption, just as the light coming from within Vāsavadattā, found within Kandarpaketu's dream, seems to inundate the universe even beyond the external frame of the dream (or the text). Indeed, we should never lose sight of the fact that the text as a whole is about this very eruption, narrating as it does a story of love that begins as an internal dream vision of its hero and heroine and manages to conquer external reality despite adverse circumstances and against all odds.

Thus, even when Subandhu's emphasis shifts from the human center to the periphery of natural entities that make up day and night, spring and the other seasons, and rivers and mountains, as well as flora and fauna, these entities are often imagined as if they were loving human subjects, with a clear preference for womankind. The most obvious example is that of rivers, which are almost always female in gender in India. For instance, the river Revā, whose description we briefly sampled earlier, is herself imagined as lying in a tight embrace with Mount Vindhya, whom she clasps with the stretched arms that are her waves (*revayā priyatamayêva prasārita-taraṅgôpagūḍhaḥ*, p. 60). Another favorite is Lady Night. When she is done with partying, she tosses her goblet, still containing some red wine, into the western ocean in an event we may otherwise refer to as moonset (*śeṣa-madhu-bhāji caṣaka iva vibhāvarī-vadhvāḥ apara-jala-nidhi-payasi ... majjati*, pp. 28–29), and the soft breeze at dusk is imagined as her sigh of relief, now that

she can resume her love life (*pravāti sāyantane tanīyasi niśā-niśvāsa-nibhe nabhasvati*, p. 124).[30]

Much of this, of course, is neither new nor unique to Subandhu. Many poets before and after him have anthropomorphized the night and the moon and have portrayed many pairs of rivers and mountains as lovers. Subandhu's innovation consists of delving deep into the world of imagination and dreams and of his invention of a special language necessary for this exploration.[31] An important building block of this language is the long adjectival compound. One aspect of these compounds that Subandhu brilliantly exploits is their exocentric nature: they are not about their own head noun (for example, bedrooms) but about an entity outside them (for example, the women who inhabit the bedrooms). This makes them particularly useful for the depiction of the whole drama of nature, which, Subandhu believes, is also exocentric in the sense that it is a by-product of human love. Masterfully crafted and carefully placed in the context of the much longer sentence, our compound suggests that the women in love lend the dawning day its first light, thereby uniquely underscoring a poetic vision of the female eroticized subject as the world's most powerful and creative force.

This, however, is only one of our compound's special linguistic and extralinguistic capacities. For exocentric though it may be, it also has a very marked center that captures the ears (or eyes) of the readers. Even if the entity it modifies is located outside it, its logical, musical, and iconic structure allows us a peek into the inner workings of this eroticized female subject. This, we should note, is a rare and precious opportunity. For all its fascination with love, the *Vāsavadattā* never actually depicts lovemaking as it happens. This, too, is true not just of this work. Sanskrit poets dwell at great length on the foreplay spat and on the aftermath of love, the emissaries exchanged between lovers, and the pining of the separated, but hardly ever on the way love is actually consummated. There are some obvious reasons for this, of course, including the fear of trespassing the boundaries of propriety. Then there is the theory developed by Ānandavardhana some three centuries after Subandhu, according to which poetry is at its best only if it suggests, rather than explicitly narrates, emotional experiences such as love. Ānandavardhana believed that for a reader to be able to "taste" eros in a poem, it would have to be intimated by things such as the setting (for example, a moonlit night) or the bodily gestures of the characters (for example, trembling),

30. Following Krishnamachariar's gloss: *sva-pati-candra-samāgama-janita-niśvāsena* (p. 282 in his edition).

31. On the relationship between imagination, love, and language in the *Vāsavadattā*, see Bronner 2010, 25–33.

as well as the description of their beautiful body parts (such as the lips); if, instead, the poet actually says such things as "they fell in love" or "they made love," the psychoaesthetic effect is instantly destroyed.[32] Consider, in this context, the speech of the pet parrots, described by Subandhu in another exocentric compound almost immediately following ours. These birds heard the numerous bold words that the women had said while having sex at night, and at dawn they cleverly incorporate them into their chatter, with the instant effect of making these women blush (*kṣaṇa-dā-gata-surata-vaiyātya-vacana-śata-smāraka-gṛha-śuka-cāṭu-vyāhṛti-kṣaṇa-janita-mandâkṣāsu*, p. 32). Among the many charming aspects of this compound, note the fact that these "bold words" are never actually reported, either in real time or in the parrots' reworking, but the emotional reaction to them, from a vantage point twice removed, gives some clues about what may have actually been said.

But in my view, the standard theories of propriety and of the suggestive capacities of language fail to capture Subandhu's poetic project. For him, the inner processes of women in love are simply too complex, enigmatic, and powerful to be captured directly, whether linguistically or otherwise. Love is amorphous (*anaṅga*) and invisible; it lurks deep inside a woman's heart and seems to use her eyes as peepholes, as Subandhu tells us when describing Vāsavadattā later in the same dream sentence (*hṛdayâvāsa-gṛhâvasthitasya hṛc-chaya-vilāsino gavâkṣa-śaṅkām upajanayatā*, p. 37). And when it does emerge through these very holes, as we have seen, its forceful eruption is certain to blind the onlooker with its gushing flood of light, comparable to a thousand milky oceans. Thus, the only way to see love is to look inside oneself, with eyes closed, as Kandarpaketu does in his dream, and the only way to describe it is by crafting a language that allows us to look through it and, reflexively, at it.

This brings us back to the very center of the compound whose biography we set out to narrate, and to the chiastic window or peephole that Subandhu momentarily opens into his female subjects. Leading to this window are the ubiquitous nail-marks, a set of handmade characters that have been compared by some Sanskrit poets to an alphabet (*nakha-pada-lipi*).[33] This paralinguistic script surely tells a story about the way it was inscribed, just as there is a reason that the

32. Ānandavardhana's position is actually slightly more nuanced. He argues that a text's emotional flavor (*rasa*) is necessarily suggested (*vācyād vibhinna eva*) and that even in cases where the *rasa* is mentioned by name (*svaśabdaniveditatva*), it is still understood only through suggestion (*Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana, pp. 78–84). The idea that a direct expression of love actually destroys the experience of *rasa* is, however, older (see *Kāvyādarśa* of Daṇḍin 1.62–64).

33. For examples of images based on the script of nail-marks, see *Śiśupālavadha* of Māgha 7.39, *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* of Bilhaṇa 6.16, and *Vemabhūpālacarita* of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa, p. 202 (given here in chronological order).

women's hair got loose in the first place. But Subandhu does not settle for this superficial and rather straightforward story. For him, the nail-marks are more interesting as an icon of love's complex mixture of pleasure and pain. Indeed, the first thing we find in the inner core of the compound, arguably representing the inside of the female subject, is physical pain (*vedanā*). This ache is then transformed (*kṛta*) into the subject's actual voice, the aforementioned *sīt* sound, a paralinguistic sign that has become a part of language. As a word, as well as in real life, *sīt*, too, is a complex symbol, indicating a range of conflicting emotions. Although it is definitely not the "sobbing" of Gray's translation, it is "supposed to indicate pleasure, pain, or applause," as one dictionary has it.[34] All these emotions and reactions can actually be heard here: pain is particularly obvious, but so is pleasure, especially if we recall that *sīt* results in light rays from the teeth, an invariable token of smiling in *kāvya*.

Like the blush in response to the parrots' chatter, then, the pain-turned-smile captures the complexity of love the way Subandhu understands it. Here, too, this capturing is done from a stance that is twice (or thrice) removed, in response to the women's initial response to the remnants of love on their bodies. Seen through Subandhu's self-reflexive subjects, when reminded of the night's events, and with the aid of a self-reflexive language that calls attention to its own musical, iconic, and other paralinguistic aspects, love emerges as a special blend of pain and pleasure or, indeed, intensity and sweetness. Pleasure surely outweighs the pain, but the ultimate smile is nonetheless inseparable from the ache that produced it. The *sīt* sound is thus the nexus of an internal, creative transformation on several levels—of pain to pleasure, presence to memory, and sound to meaning—powerful enough to transform the external world and sufficiently savory to bring about a new day of love.

F. Conclusion

Of the six types of contextual relations that Becker identifies when he is suggesting a "move from a more atomistic mode of interpretation to a more contextual one," the last is "silential relations," namely, "relations of a text to the unsaid or the unsayable."[35] It is my understanding that of all the contexts that inform the verbal components of the *Vāsavadattā*, this last one is the most crucial, precisely because Subandhu viewed the unsaid of love as *by definition* unsayable. Of course, compounds are only one of the atoms (or molecules) that make up his

34. Monier-Williams 1970, 1,077.

35. Becker 1995, 186.

rich work, and my essay surely does not do justice to the relations between this one part and its larger whole (Becker's "structural relations").[36] Nor should my "biography" of one specimen be taken as a representative of the entire species of long Sanskrit compounds, whether exocentric or not; the great variety of these large creatures, which populate the works of Sanskrit literature in general and prose poems in particular, is still waiting to be studied. These compounds need not share the same acoustic pattern, flow, syntactic design, ecological impact, or iconicity as those of the example I have looked at, and certainly not its emotional flavor.

Still, I hope that the exercise of closely examining one such example is not without merit, if only to call attention to the fact that the long compound as an artifact is carefully constructed and thoughtfully placed so as to contribute to the overall aesthetic effect. Future studies, I hope, will provide a more systematic mapping of such compounds in *kāvya* in Sanskrit, as well as in languages influenced by it. I am thinking particularly of the Telugu literary tradition, which incorporated wholesale the Sanskrit compound and allowed it unique salience. I suspect that among the features that attracted Telugu writers to such compounds were their potential combination of intensity and sweetness, their unique musical and rhythmical possibilities, and their usefulness for the depiction of internal transformations that affect the outer world. However unrepresentative our compound may be, it should certainly be taken as indicative of the genius of its maker at a particularly productive junction in the history of Sanskrit *kāvya*.

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36. Becker 1995, 186.

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10

Bāṇa's Death in the *Kādambarī*

Herman Tieken

A. Introduction

Following literary tradition, Bāṇa died while composing the *Kādambarī*. The text, which was completed by his son, is as a result divided into two parts, a *pūrvabhāga* and *uttarabhāga*. On closer consideration, however, there is something strange about Bāṇa's death. In the first place, the point in the text where Bāṇa's death is supposed to have taken place is almost too good to be true. Secondly, the idea of the completion of the text by the author's son appears to have strong echoes in events narrated in the text itself. Thirdly, the division of the text, which is said to have been caused by the author's death, seems to have been known from the very beginning. All this raises the question if with Bāṇa's death we might not be dealing with a literary fiction. If so, we might ask what could have been the function of this fiction. In this essay, I intend first to have a closer look at the information provided in the text about Bāṇa's death as well as its completion by his son. After that an attempt is made to explain what might have been behind the "story" of the author's death.

B. His Father's Voice

The greater part of the first three *ucchvāsa*s of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* is taken up by the author's autobiography, which relates in detail his youth, his relationship with Harṣa, and how he was persuaded by

his relatives and friends to relate this king's adventures. In a certain way Bāṇa might well be considered the protagonist of the story, which is basically about telling stories.[1] Bāṇa does not appear in the story of his other composition, the *Kādambarī*. This is also not to be expected, as the tale is almost entirely set in a fictional world, the protagonists commuting between Ujjayinī and the world of the Gandharvas. At the same time, however, the author has had a great effect on the form of the text, as he has happened to die after he had finished only approximately two-thirds of it. The text has been completed by his son and is conformingly divided into two parts, the *pūrvabhāga* and *uttarabhāga*, written by the father and the son respectively. Of Bāṇa's death and the son taking over his work we are informed at the beginning of the *utttarabhāga*, which has an introduction in a verse of its own. Thus, verse 4 on p. 239 reads:

yāte divaṃ pitari tadvacasaiva sārdhaṃ
vicchedam āpa bhuvi yas tu kathāprabandhaḥ
duḥkhaṃ satāṃ tadasamāptikṛtaṃ vilokya
prārabdha eva sa mayā na kavitvadarpāt

When my father went to heaven
The flow of his story
Along with his voice
Was checked on earth.
I, considering the unfinished work to be
A sorrow to the good,
Again set it in motion—
But out of no pride in my poetic skill.[2]

It is as if before taking over the task of finishing the story of the *Kādambarī*, the son had been able to discuss with his father how the story was to end. For there is no clear break nor are there contradictions between the two parts. In fact, attempts to distinguish between the styles of father and son have not yielded any verifiable conclusions.[3] The smooth transition is also the gist of the story, admittedly of doubtful authenticity, of how Bāṇa selected the son who was to finish the *Kādambarī*. Apparently Bāṇa had a premonition that he would not be able to complete the story. He called in his sons and asked them who would be willing to undertake the task of finishing the text. The first son who volunteered, failed

1. Tieken 2001b.
2. The translation is by Layne 1991, 237.
3. Hueckstedt 1985, 149ff. Note that the criteria put forward by Hueckstedt are mostly of a highly impressionistic nature and as such prove little. In fact, the chapter in question is not the most convincing in this otherwise useful and interesting book.

to pass the test put to him by his father, which was to describe a pile of wood. In fact, his description almost killed Bāṇa by its dryness and lack of imagination. Fortunately, the next son fared better and could be entrusted with the completion of the *Kādambarī*. However, it is clear that we are dealing with an apocryphal story here, which was fabricated to explain, among other things, precisely the smooth transition in the *Kādambarī* from the father's part to that of the son.[4]

C. Speaking of Death

Even if, as is assumed in the story just quoted, Bāṇa's death might not have been unexpected, it is unlikely that this also applied to its exact moment. However, if we look at Bāṇa's final sentence, the break appears to be strikingly neat and even has a poetic side to it. It is almost as if it was decided by father and son that the break was to be at that particular point in the story even if Bāṇa would be still alive and working after that. To begin with, while we are made to believe that Bāṇa's death took place while he was writing the *Kādambarī*, he did not die in the middle of a sentence. In fact, Bāṇa's last sentence is complete, his last (written) word is *iti* "thus" and the first words of his son are *api ca* "and next." As said, but for the interruption it creates, the caesura is remarkably neat. In addition to that, if we turn to the content of the final sentence written by Bāṇa, it cannot be denied that there is some kind of coincidence between this and Bāṇa's subsequent death.

The passage concerned contains Pattralekhā's report to Candrāpīḍa of a conversation she had with Kādambarī. The situation is the following. During his *dig-vijaya*, Candrāpīḍa, the son of the king of Ujjayinī, had fallen in love with Kādambarī, a princess in the Gandharva capital Hemakūṭa. Their love is mutual. However, letters arrive from Candrāpīḍa's father urging him to come home. He leaves his servant Pattralekhā behind with Kādambarī, expecting her to join him later. At home in Ujjayinī Candrāpīḍa is anxiously waiting for the arrival of Pattralekhā, who might provide him with news about his lover, Kādambarī. As soon as Pattralekhā arrives in Ujjayinī Candrāpīḍa takes her aside and interrogates her about Kādambarī. Pattralekhā relates to him a long conversation she had with Kādambarī in which the latter expressed her love for the prince and asked herself if it is proper to send him a message through Pattralekhā and, if so, what kind of message. It is the report of these considerations by Kādambarī which is interrupted by Bāṇa's death. Bāṇa's last words concern Kādambarī's

4. The story is told by Hueckstedt 1985, 140–41, who had found it in the Sanskrit introduction to Krishṇamohana Śāstrī's edition of the *pūrvabhāga*.

rejection of the possibility of sending a message, saying that following her "death" [*sic*] Candrāpīḍa would know the extent and depth of her love for him. Below I quote Layne's translation of the last paragraph written by Bāṇa:

> [Pattralekhā to Candrāpīḍa:] Although her heart was aflutter with joy, she still seemed to take recourse to bashfulness, which is natural to maidens, and very softly spoke: "I know you have great affection for me, but how can maidens whose nature is tender as young acacia blossoms be so brazen, especially those who are still so very young? They act rashly who themselves send messages or approach their lovers. I am a young maiden and ashamed to send a bold message myself. Besides, what message can I send? 'You are dear to me,' is superfluous. 'Am I dear to you?' is a silly question. 'I am deeply in love with you,' is the talk of a harlot. 'I cannot live without you,' is contrary to fact. 'The Bodiless God overpowers me,' is excusing my own fault. 'I am given to you by the Mind-born God,' is too obvious a means of approaching him. 'I have forcibly possessed you,' is the boldness of an unchaste woman. 'You must come, by all means,' is the pride of beauty. 'I will come myself,' is a woman's fickleness. 'This one is your servant and has no other passion than you,' is frivolously expressing total devotion. 'Through the fear of rejection, I send no message,' is an attempt to awaken him who sleeps. 'I shall know severe grief in living apart from you, for that is undesired by me,' is displaying too much love. 'You will know my love by my death (*jñāsyasi maraṇena prītim*),' is simply impossible."

Admittedly, this is not the only passage in the text in which people speak about death or, for that matter, die. In the text several persons actually die, among whom are Puṇḍarīka, his reincarnation, Vaiśampāyana, and the latter's reincarnation, the parrot Vaiśampāyana. Furthermore, there are Candrāpīḍa, who dies after he has heard that his friend Vaiśampāyana has died, his reincarnation, King Śūdraka, and the parrot Vaiśampāyana's father, who was killed by an old hunter. Finally, Mahāśvetā as well as Kādambarī express the desire to die after having seen their dead lovers, Puṇḍarīka and Candrāpīḍa respectively. Nevertheless, it seems significant that Bāṇa's death takes place at the very place it does, immediately after Kādambarī has used the word *maraṇa*, or "death."[5]

5. The translation is by Layne 1991, 236. The corresponding text is *Kādambarī*, pp. 236–37 (§ 225 and 226).

D. Fathers and Sons

In addition to this "coincidence" it should be noted that the idea of Bāṇa's son taking over his father's task has several echoes in the story itself, in which the relationship between fathers and sons plays an important role. A case in point is formed by the old parrot and his son Vaiśampāyana. Apart from the author of the text, the parrot Vaiśampāyana is the first and most "inclusive" narrator in the story. However, we are told that he got that far only through the help of his father, who actually gave his life to save that of his son. For, when Vaiśampāyana was still a fledgling, the forest in which he was living with his father—his mother had died almost immediately after his birth—was visited by a group of hunters. An old hunter, who was no longer capable of chasing bigger game, started killing the defenseless birds in the trees. The young Vaiśampāyana hid among his father's wings. While his father was killed and thrown on the ground his son remained unnoticed and managed to escape to become, *nomen est omen*, a great storyteller.[6]

Another father-and-son pair is formed by King Tārāpīḍa and the *yuvarāja*, or crown prince, Candrāpīḍa. A particular striking incident in their relationship is when Candrāpīḍa has died and his father and mother come and sit around the dead son's body to protect it in order that his soul might use the body a second time.

In fact, the relationship between Tārāpīḍa and Candrāpīḍa in many respects resembles that between Bāṇa and his son. As we have seen, Bāṇa's son is quite modest about his ambitions as a poet. It was not arrogance (*darpa*) which made him complete his father's work. In fact, he even anticipated the question why in the light of his father's achievements in the field of prose *kāvya* he so much as dared to write such a poem himself: "That the syllables flow from my mouth undaunted by the prose composition of my elder is due to the power of my father and of nobody else."[7] He almost literally admits that he has got a free ride by being allowed to finish the work begun by his father: "Even lesser rivers here on earth become big before reaching the ocean by joining the Ganges."[8] If he is not afraid to complete the work in his own colorless words it is because he is

6. In fact, the fate of Vaiśampāyana rather resembles that of Bāṇa himself, whose mother died young.

7. *Kādambarī*, p. 240:
gadye kṛte 'pi guruṇā tu tathākṣarāṇi /
yan nirgatāni pitureva sa me 'nubhāvaḥ /5/.

8. *Kādambarī*, p. 240:
gaṅgāṃ praviśya bhuvi tanmayatām upetya /
sphītāḥ samudram itarā api yānti nadyaḥ /6/.

actually intoxicated by the wine of Kādambarī (p. 240, verse 7). Finally, he notes that, as it takes some time for seeds to ripen and grow into plants, he cannot help it when he reaps the harvest sown by his father (p. 240, verse 8).

Similar sentiments concerning father and son are expressed in the story itself as well, in particular in connection with the *yuvarāja* Candrāpīḍa and his father. After being anointed as *yuvarāja* Candrāpīḍa is sent out on a *digvijaya*, "conquest of the quartes." In this connection, however, it is said that he is merely stepping in the footsteps of his father: "After your inauguration, begin conquest of the directions, and in the course of your marches again subdue the earth with its ornament of seven continents, as it was once conquered by your father."[9] The same idea is met with again somewhat later, where it is said that during the *abhiṣeka* royal glory passed on to Candrāpīḍa without leaving his father Tārāpīḍa.[10] Still later Candrāpīḍa's friend Vaiśampāyana asks him what has actually been left by his father for him to conquer.[11]

With all this it is to be noted that the name of Bāṇa's son is nowhere mentioned, neither in the introduction to the *pūrvabhāga* nor in that to the *uttarabhāga*. Since Bühler's time the son is known as Bhaṭṭa Bhūṣaṇa, though where Bühler has found this information is not clear.[12] Apart from that, an attempt has been made to abstract his name from a verse in Dhanapāla's *Tilakamañjarī*, in which apparently a pun is made on the name Bāṇa, which also means "arrow," and the tribal name Pulind(h)ra, which is supposed to be the name of the son.[13] The same name is indeed found in some manuscripts as well, which have Bhaṭṭa Pulina or Pulinda.[14] The son's anonymity might be a matter of modesty on the son's part, or, to recycle an image used by the son himself, the Ganges does not change its name after smaller rivers have poured their water into it. However, if Bāṇa's intention was to give his son a good start in life as a poet, it was not very practical of him not to mention his son by name.[15]

9. *Kādambarī*, p. 109: *abhiṣekānantaraṃ ca prārabdhadigvijayaḥ paribhraman vijitām api tava pitrā saptadvīpabhūṣaṇāṃ punar vijayasva vasuṃdharām* (§ 109). The English translation is by Layne 1991, 112.

10. *Kādambarī*, p. 110: *amuñcatyapi tārāpīḍaṃ tatkṣaṇameva saṃcakrāma rājalakṣmīḥ* (§111).

11. *Kādambarī*, p. 117: *yuvarāja kiṃ na jitaṃ devena mahārājādhirājena tārāpīḍena yaj jeṣyasi* (§ 122).

12. See Scharpé 1937, 20.

13. Scharpé 1937: 18.
kevalo 'pi sphuran bāṇaḥ karoti vimadān kavīn /
kiṃ punaḥ klptasaṃdhānapulindhrakṛtasaṃnidhiḥ //.

14. Scharpé 1937, 19.

15. As such the situation in the *Kādambarī* differs markedly from that in the *Avadānakalpalatā* of Kṣemendra, which was completed by his son Somendra. The latter also wrote the introduction to the text.

Whatever might be the case here, the fact remains that it is strange that the son's name is not mentioned, especially where in the verse-introduction to the *pūrvabhāga* Bāṇa's immediate ancestors are all mentioned by name.

E. Breaking the Rules of the Genre

Finally I would like to draw attention to verse 20 of the introduction of the *pūrvabhāga*, and in particular the meaning of the compound *atidvayī* occurring in it. From this verse it would appear that the division of the text into two parts was planned from the very beginning. In the same verse, however, not a word is said about the cause of the division, namely the author's untimely death. Verse 20 (p. 5) reads as follows:

dvijena tenākṣatakaṇṭhakauṇṭhyayā
mahāmanomohamalīmasāndhayā
alabdhavaidagdhyavilāsamugdhayā
dhiyā nibaddheyam atidvayī kathā.

In the first three *pāda*s, Bāṇa is described as an immature poet whose dull choice of words was not yet broken, who was deluded, lacked quick-wittedness, and was naïve in matters of charm. This negative picture of the poet has generally been taken as a trope, contrasting with the positive description given in the fourth *pāda*. Thus, Ridding provides the following translation:

> By that Brahman, albeit with a mind keeping even in his unspoken words its original dullness blinded by the darkness of its own utter folly, and simple from having never gained the charm of ready wit, this tale, surpassing the other two, was fashioned, even Kādambarī.[16]

The more recent translation by Layne reads as follows:

> By that Twice-born one,
> With his intellect as dull as ever,
> Blinded by the utter darkness of arrogance,
> And naive from a lack of lively cunning,
> This story
> —to which there is no second—
> Was composed.[17]

16. Ridding 1896, 3.
17. Layne 1991, 6.

In her translation of *atidvayī* Ridding follows the commentator Bhānucandra, according to whom the *Kādambarī* surpasses (*ati*) the pair (*dvaya*) consisting of the *Bṛhatkathā* and *Vāsavadattā*.[18] According to Ridding *atidvayī* could also be a kind of synonym for *advitīyā*, "without a second," and this is how the compound is translated by Layne.

As far as I know, the type of compound is otherwise unknown. It would seem that we are dealing with an *ad hoc* formation here, devised for the occasion. In this connection I would like to note that the word *dvaya* does not only mean "pair" but also, if not regularly, "two-fold, coming in two (parts)."[19] For *atidvayī kathā* this should result in a translation something like "a story which in an *ati*-way is divided into two." As to the word *ati*, it might refer to the highly exceptional circumstances, namely the author's death, which caused the division of the text. However, this does not really fit the context of the verse. On the basis of the first three *pāda*s we would expect a reference to some literary blunder. Another possibility therefore is that *ati* refers to the breach of the literary convention involved in the division (like *ati* in *atipāta*). In this connection we should keep in mind that Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, which probably was the very work which Bāṇa tried to emulate in his *Kādambarī*, presents one long, continuous story, uninterrupted by any division into chapters.[20] Note also the early *alaṃkārika* Bhāmaha, according to whom the *ākhyāyikā* is divided into *ucchvāsa*s, which in the given context meant that the *kathā*, to which type the *Vāsavadattā* as well as the *Kādambarī* belong, was not divided in this way.[21] Thus, in verse 20 it is said that in the *Kādambarī* the author has produced a work, which goes against the rule of the genre by being divided into two parts.

If the interpretation of the compound *atidvayī* given just now is correct it would indeed appear that the division of the text was indeed planned from the very beginning.[22] However, it is a strange if not absurd experience to find out later that the cause of the division is the author's death. After all the points

18. See Hueckstedt 1985, 156, note 5. For all we know, the *dvaya* "pair" might also refer to Bāṇa's own two works, the *Harṣacarita* and the *Caṇḍīśataka*, which form a "pair" in the sense that they are written by the same author.

19. See *trayī vidyā* for the Veda.

20. The relationship between Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* and Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* has been investigated by Cartellieri 1887; Thomas 1898; Mankowski 1900 and 1902; and Scharpé 1937, 60–71.

21. See Bhāmaha's *Kāvyālaṃkāra* I 25. Note, however, that according to Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* I 26 the division into *ucchvāsas* is occasionally (*prasaṅgena*) also found in *kathās*. On the *kathā-ākhyāyikā* controversy, see, for example, De 1924.

22. It is theoretically possible that verse 20 of the introduction to the *pūrvabhāga* had been written and added to the text only after the completion of the text by the son. However, it is highly unlikely that the verse had indeed been composed by the son. The utterly critical tone of the

discussed above one may ask if the author's death is not a literary fabrication, the purpose of which was to divide the text into two in a convincing way. In this connection it should be noted that there is evidence to suggest that for a work to be recognized as written by Bāṇa it should indeed have been divided into two parts. However, before presenting this evidence, I would like to return briefly to the verse introductions to the *pūrvabhāga* and *uttarabhāga*.

F. Bāṇa's Genealogy

As has already been noted by other scholars, there is a discrepancy between Bāṇa's genealogy in the introductory verses of the *Kādambarī* and the one provided in the first *ucchvāsa* in his *Harṣacarita*.[23] Thus, the *Harṣacarita* starts with Kubera, born in the family of the Vātsyāyanas. This Kubera had four sons, who included Pāśupata. This Pāśupata had a son Arthapati, who, in turn, had eleven sons. Bāṇa was the son of one of these eleven, namely Citrabhānu. In the *Kādambarī* one generation—that of Pāśupata—is skipped and Arthapati is made into Kubera's son. The result of the abridgement is interesting, consisting as it does of "ego" plus three ancestors. As such it is reminiscent of the genealogies often found in inscriptions, which are ultimately grafted on the *śrāddha* ritual.[24] The motive behind the abridgement might well have been to make the genealogy agree with this pattern. If so, this would suggest that we might be dealing with a later addition to the text, made by someone who was sufficiently far removed from the persons concerned to have no qualms about a little deceit. The question then arises if this also affects the status of the verse introduction of the *uttarabhāga*, in which we are informed that the author had died while writing the text. On the other hand, if the intention of the addition was to pass off, or to reaffirm, the *Kādambarī* as a work by the same Bāṇa who wrote the *Harṣacarita*, would the person responsible for it not have been extra careful in sticking exactly to the genealogy as presented in the *Harṣacarita*?

Given this uncertainty about the authenticity of the verse introductions to the *Kādambarī* we should reckon with the possibility that the division of the text

verse and the lack of piety towards Bāṇa emanating from it cannot hail from the same son who next, ostensibly as a tribute to his father, completed the text. Coming from Bāṇa himself the same words can be read as feigned modesty or even a cynical anticipation of imagined criticism. Apart from that, as I have tried to show earlier, there is too much coincidence involved in the author's death to accept it as a fact.

23. Scharpé 1937, 14. Scharpé refers to P. Peterson, the first editor of the text.

24. See Tieken 2001c, 136.

into two parts is not original but something introduced only secondarily.[25] However, it should be mentioned here that for the question as to what might have been the intention of the division it probably does not really make a difference whether it was introduced by the author himself or by some later editor.

G. Bāṇa's Trademark

Above, it has been suggested that *ati* in *atidvayī* might refer to the breach of the tradition involved in the division of the *Kādambarī* into two parts. Otherwise, if not unexpected, the division is at least exceptional, being caused by the author's death. Something like this, but definitely less dramatic, is found in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* as well. The latter text is formally divided into eight chapters, or *ucchvāsa*s. However, apart from this division there is another division into two parts. Typically (that is, typically for Bāṇa) this division cuts through the one into *ucchvāsa*s as it takes place somewhere in the middle of an *ucchvāsa*, in case the third. Thus, as already indicated above, the first part of the *Harṣacarita* consists of the so-called autobiography of the author. The story of King Harṣa's adventures starts only somewhere in the middle of the third *ucchvāsa* with the words *śrūyatām, asti...*[26] Apparently compositions by Bāṇa were in some striking or irregular way divided into two parts. In fact, something similar may be found with other authors as well, who likewise seem to have developed special features, which as such have come to serve as their signatures. In this connection I suggest that we have a quick look at the works of some of the early *kāvya* authors.

A clear instance of the phenomenon I referred to just now is found in the works of Harṣa. In his *Priyadarśikā* the eponymous heroine gets lost on her way to King Udayana, to whom she is to be married. The girl is "found" in a forest and brought to Udayana's court where she is living for some time without anybody realizing who she actually is. To the courtiers she is known as Āraṇyikā after the forest (*araṇya*) where she was found. The plot of Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* is almost identical. In this play, however, the girl has suffered shipwreck on the sea (*sagara*). Accordingly, she is known by the name Sāgarikā. Harṣa's third play, the *Nāgānanda*, is completely different from the two referred to just now, which,

25. In that case, however, the question might arise why the *Caṇḍīśataka*, which is generally attributed to Bāṇa, has not been divided into two parts as well.

26. *Harṣacarita*, p. 94.

like Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*, represent the so-called *nāṭikā* type of play. The plot of the *Nāgānanda* is also found in Candragomin's play, the *Lokānanda*.[27] One of the changes brought about by Harṣa compared to his predecessor's *Lokānanda* concerns the name of the protagonist. In the *Lokānanda* he is called Maṇicūḍa after the crest-jewel (*cūḍāmaṇi*) he is born with.[28] Though the same crest-jewel plays an important role in the *Nāgānanda* as well, in that version the hero is called Jīmūtavāhana, or "He who rides the clouds." The reason behind the change of the name may be found in the story itself. For, after Jīmūtavāhana had substituted himself for someone else as a victim at a human sacrifice, he is carried off into the sky by the bird Garuḍa. So, in the same way as in the *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* the heroines are renamed Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā after the settings in which they had disappeared, a forest and the sea respectively, the protagonist of the *Nāgānanda* is named Jīmūtavāhana after the fact that he had disappeared into the sky.[29]

Harṣa's three plays thus appear to share a similar development in their stories. Apparently, this is not something coincidental but something intended, as becomes clear from the names given to the protagonists. We seem to have to do with a kind of signature of the author.

Something like this is to be found in the three plays by Bhavabhūti as well. His *Mahāvīracarita* and *Uttararāmacarita*, taken together, cover the complete *Rāmāyaṇa*, namely books 1–6 and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* respectively. An important element in both plays is Sītā's absence. In the *Mahāvīracarita* she is kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, and in the *Uttararāmacarita* she is residing in heaven without the knowledge of Rāma, who had been forced to banish her. Interestingly, in Bhavabhūti's third play, the *Mālatīmādhava*, the female protagonist, Mālatī, is kidnapped twice, the first time by the *kāpālika* Aghoraghaṇṭa and the second time by the latter's pupil Kapālakuṇḍalā. As far as the wife's or lover's absences is concerned it is almost as if the two Rāma plays have been compressed in the *Mālatīmādhava*.

And what about Kālidāsa? All but one of the compositions of this author which have come down to us, his *mahākāvya*s, his plays, and his one lyric poem,

27. However, the plot of the *Nāgānanda* does not seem to have been borrowed from the earlier *Lokānanda*. For a source Harṣa himself refers to a *vidyādharajātaka*; see Zin 2004, 143.

28. After Jīmūtavāhana had been carried off into the sky by Garuḍa, his blood-stained crest-jewel fell down into Malayavatī's lap. In this way she came to realize that her husband was in serious danger.

29. As argued by Monika Zin, the name Jīmūtavāhana in the *Nāgānanda* was probably "invented" by Harṣa and it might well be from this playwright's drama that the name has found its ways into, among other texts, the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* and *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Zin 2004).

are set in a mythic or epic world and one way or the other deal with the effects of a curse.[30] The only exception is the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, which is set in a historical period, tells a realistic story and does not refer to a curse. Typically, in the prologue this play is expressly said to be the work of a contemporary (*vartamāna*) poet. At the same time, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* we have a play within a play, which as such, we may assume, is supposed to represent the "classical" genre. It may not be surprising to note that this so-called *garbhāṅka* deals with the story of Śarmiṣṭhā, which is borrowed from the *Mahābhārata* and presents characters whose lives are in a high degree determined by curses.

H. Inventing One's Own Death

Each of the above authors seems to have developed his own specialty, which has come to serve as a kind of signature.[31] As suggested above, it might be argued that in the "irregular" division in the *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī* we are dealing with this very same phenomenon. Bāṇa apparently liked to experiment with dividing stories into two.[32]

However, why was in introducing the division in the *Kādambarī* recourse taken to such a dramatic means as the invention of the author's death? I would like to suggest that he simply did not have a real, good alternative. In trying to make this clear I would like to turn to the *Harṣacarita* first. As already noted above, this text is basically about storytelling, or rather about a poet relating a king's adventures. In fact, the king's adventures proved to be too many for one session of storytelling. The story ends with the appearance of the evening and the rising of the moon. The audience will have to wait till the next morning for the story to be continued. As a result the main purpose of the king's campaign, namely the killing of the king of Gauḍa, remains untold. However, we seem to be dealing with a literary ploy here. In any case, in this way we, the readers, are

30. Tieken 2001a.

31. In this connection it might be interesting to refer to Aśvaghoṣa as well, whose *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda*, the only two works which have been preserved completely, are connected in much the same way as the works discussed earlier. Thus, in the *Buddhacarita* the Buddha's qualms about a life in the ordinary world are triggered by the ugly and distressing sight of an old, a sick and a dead man. In the *Saundarananda*, I would say almost by contrast, the Buddha's brother's conversion is set in motion after he has discovered that there are women even more beautiful than his own wife. His conclusion is: why chase after beauty if there always is someone or something more beautiful than what one has.

32. As far as I could make out, this is, however, not the case in the *Caṇḍīśataka* attributed to Bāṇa.

made to believe that Harṣa was such a great king that his success in this military campaign was self-evident and did not need to be spelled out.[33] In contrast to the *Harṣacarita*, in the *Kādambarī* Bāṇa is relegated to the role of external narrator. He had no role in the story and could not legitimately interfere in its course. All he could do was to interrupt the writing down of the story. One of the ways, if not the only way open to him was to invent his death, after which the task fell to his son and literary heir.

To invent one's own death may be quite a dramatic gesture. On the other hand, one may ask how personal all these details about Bāṇa actually are? In order to try and find this out we might turn to the story, or history, of Harṣa in the *Harṣacarita* and ask how "personal" this story actually is. For one thing, the story of Harṣa is not finished. It breaks off before the king begins what is the main purpose of his military campaign, namely the killing of the king of Gauḍa. However, as suggested above, we might be dealing with a literary ploy here, the purpose of which was to praise Harṣa. It seems that in the *Harṣacarita* the historical and the personal facts are sacrificed to a literary trope. As I have argued elsewhere, in the *Harṣacarita* Harṣa is indeed depicted as an actor in a dynastic myth rather than as a historical person.[34] Could Bāṇa's so-called autobiography at the beginning of the *Harṣacarita* not be some kind of literary topos as well?[35] In any case, it has developed into a standard feature of the genre, as is shown by the later *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, the final chapter of which relates how the poet Bilhaṇa came to be connected with Vikramāditya's court. If we are indeed dealing with a kind of standard feature of the genre, this would reduce the personal element in the autobiography. This finding concerning Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* might also affect the story of his death in the *Kādambarī*. Are we dealing with a real incident from the personal life of the author here or indeed merely with a fabrication introduced to link the text with the *Harṣacarita*? For a later editor it might not have been difficult to invent the author's death, as he dealt with an audience which he could make believe anything as long as it was convincing or consistent with what they already knew about the author. For Bāṇa himself or his son it is more difficult. One cannot fool one's colleagues and contemporaries. But how can we be so certain that the author of the *Kādambarī* or the *Harṣacarita* was indeed

33. See Tieken 2001b. The audience will have to wait till the next morning for the story to be continued. Note in this connection that Bāṇa has begun his storytelling in the first place only the next morning; see Cowell and Thomas 1963, 78–79 and 260.

34. Tieken 2001b, esp. p. 200.

35. As to Bāṇa's problematic relationship with Harṣa, note that the *Bṛhatkathā*, the archetypal *kathā*, was at first rejected by the Sātavāhana king as well.

writing with a concrete audience in mind? Could we not be dealing with an author working at home and on his own, aiming at a more or less abstract reading public? If Bāṇa's death in the *Kādambarī* is a literary fabrication, this would indeed most likely have been the case.[36]

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36. The same may be the case with Śūdraka, the author of the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, who in the prologue of the play, which is supposedly written by himself, is said to be dead.

11

Persons Compounded and Confounded

A Reading of Bāṇa's Kādambarī

David Shulman

A. Introducing *Kādambarī*

In more ways than one, Bāṇa's seventh-century masterpiece, the *Kādambarī*—arguably the finest extant exemplar of sustained Sanskrit prose—is a riddle posed to the reader. For one thing, it is not so easy to classify this book: it is a *gadya-kāvya*, no doubt about that, but there is an ongoing discussion about its analytical definition; in modern times, many scholars have called it a novel, and the very name *Kādambarī* has come to mean "novel" in north Indian languages (in fact, there is really nothing novelistic about it at all, and it would probably be better to call it something like a "lyrical romance").[1] Then there is the undeniably tantalizing, baffling nature of the story Bāṇa tells, although this narrative is itself largely hidden beneath a thick layer of surface texture, with rich figuration, phono-aesthetic effects, and a mind-boggling lexical-semantic exfoliation; the reader's experience of the book is mostly shaped by this visible surface and its peculiar syntactic patterns, as I hope to show. It is easy to lose track of the narrative, and even if one does make the continuous effort of keeping the convoluted identity-twists and superimpositions in mind, it is almost impossible to remember the plot as a whole without confusion. I had to read the whole work several times before I finally

1. As recognized by Hueckstedt 1985, 9–11.

figured it out in some relatively stable fashion, and even now I often forget some crucial link. One could, of course, concoct diagrams and tables of the characters in their various births and rebirths, but there is something quite antithetical to Bāṇa's whole enterprise in resorting to such devices. We are, I think, meant to be confused; also repeatedly amazed. But for all the author's evident investment in sheer intra-linguistic musicality and dazzling embellishments, the storyline is far from irrelevant. I will posit a radical isomorphism between the surface texture, above all its syntax in the wider sense, and the way the plot winds forward, reverses direction, seeks closure. In terms of our awareness as we read on, we have the repeated sense of apparently discrete planes of perception suddenly coming into alignment or even fusing. The story actually foregrounds this sensation, sometimes explicitly, at other times in more purely evocative ways. As a result, one cannot help asking questions such as: Who is actually telling us this story? Who is the listener? Which character is the central hero or heroine, if there is such?

The latter question is far from trivial. One might think that Kādambarī herself, who appears almost precisely at the mid-point of the complete, two-part work, and who has given her name to the book as a whole, must be the major heroine. Or perhaps it is her lover, Candrâpīḍa, who deserves the title—or the two lovers as a unit do. But then Candrâpīḍa, as we will see, like various others, is actually someone else. So perhaps it is this important other persona—Candra, the Moon—who is the hero, and the book would then be an extensive meditation on a lunar mode of being, as has been gently suggested by the skilled modern translator, Gwendolyn Lane.[2] On the other hand, the Indian tradition seems to regard both Kādambarī and Candrâpīḍa as somehow secondary to another pair of mostly unhappy lovers, Mahāśvetā and Puṇḍarīka (including the latter's further births and incarnations). We see this in the fact that the "received text" of the *Kādambarī*, as distinct from its "recorded" version—to use a distinction made by V. Narayana Rao—takes the *Mahāśvetā-vṛttânta* as the real heart of the book, the quite autonomous embedded segment that people mostly read and know. In fact, probably any impartial reader would come to the same conclusion: Mahāśvetā and Puṇḍarīka are both the most compelling of the characters and the true point of departure for this narrative seen in linear progression, as several modern retellings clearly show us. I am not sure that recycling the story in this "historical," linear mode is such a good idea, since Bāṇa definitely wanted us to read it in the bewildering order in which he tells it; yet there comes a point when such a reduction becomes necessary for the characters in the story as well as for us, somewhat precariously perched outside it.

2. Introduction xx–xxi.

Apart from all this, we have the claim, structured into the book as we have it, that its author died about two-thirds of the way through it, leaving the work to be completed by his son, Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa. Nearly everyone—with the notable exception of Herman Tieken—takes this statement, borne out by a series of verses at the point the son took over, as a simple fact. Yet even if there is something factual here, and we should not assume this, it is certainly not simple. The *Uttarabhāga*, Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa's conclusion to the work, which ties all the loose ends of the narrative together, is no more than one possible ending. We know of at least two others, each fully articulated: one by Daṇḍin in his *Avanti-sundarī-kathā*, the second attested by both Kṣemendra in his *Bṛhat-kathā-mañjarī* and Somadeva in the *Kathā-sarit-sāgara*.[3] And there are also surviving hints of other possible endings to what must have been a certain core narrative pattern that we now know as the *Kādambarī*.[4] So, is this a book without a given ending? Is the *Pūrva-bhāga*, the part Bāṇa himself must have written, posed as a riddle to the creative reader, who is meant to come up with his or her own solution? And if that is the case, then what do we think about Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa's more or less canonical attempt? Modern critics, incidentally, tend to disparage Bhūṣana Bhaṭṭa's style in comparison with that of his father—although the Sanskrit literary tradition offers no basis for such a judgment, which in any case seems to me highly myopic.

Finally, as with any major literary work, the *Kādambarī* challenges us to understand the particular expressivity and the thematic selection that come through on every page. In short: What does this book mean? What is it "really" about?

B. Who's Who

Although I will be focusing on syntax and its repercussions, there are some things that can be said, as working hypotheses, about the *Kādambarī*'s structural nodes and consistent emphases; and there is no way to avoid giving at least some raw précis of the plot, if only to orient us as we enter more deeply into this work. It would certainly be possible to read the book as a profoundly nuanced essay

3. *Kathā-sarit-sāgara* 59 (Makarandikā = Kādambarī cursed by her parents to become a Niṣādī). Details in Warder 1983, 4, 48–49, 90–92. Kṣemendra also wrote a *Padya-kādambarī*, still unpublished.

4. See Narasiṃha's play, the *Kādambarī-kalyāṇa* (fourteenth century); and the many summaries such as Abhinanda, *Kādambarī-kathā-sāra* and Kāśīnātha, *Saṅkṣipta-Kādambarī*; see Krishnamachariar 1970, 450–51. These versions deserve serious study. The problem of the multiple endings of the *Kādambarī* has been fully set out by Grintser 1995.

about two kinds or models of loving, each of them pregnant with some devastating difficulty. One model is that of Kādambarī and Candrâpīḍa; here the male lover is saddled with doubt, both about his own feelings and about those he sees in or projects on to his beloved. Candrâpīḍa hesitates, often seems rather cut-off and frozen (as perhaps befits the Moon, his deeper nature), runs off without even saying goodbye, torments himself with remorse and self-reproach, and only very gradually somehow matures into a fully engaged form of loving—and even then, he is relatively free from the passionate love-madness, akin to possession, that is so natural to most Indian lovers. We should ask ourselves, as Candrâpīḍa repeatedly asks himself, just where this problem comes from. I think it is safe to say that all readers of the text have noticed it. It is, in fact, quite rare to come across overt instances of lukewarm passion in Sanskrit literature—quite a good topic, it would thus seem, for a sophisticated *mahākāvya*. The second model is lived out by the wholly admirable Mahāśvetā and her almost entirely adequate lover, Puṇḍarīka. Here the trouble lies, perhaps, in the fact that Puṇḍarīka is supposed to be living an ascetic, passion-less existence when he falls in love, and he never quite resolves the conflict; various commentators have stressed this aspect. But Puṇḍarīka also embodies the true vulnerability of loving when taken to its final stage, death, in the conventional lists of the *kāmâvasthās*.[5] It is all too much for him; he is a delicate soul anyway, and then there is the torture caused by the Moon (his bosom friend in his birth-to-come), whom he curses to die and be reborn. This business of cursing your best friend deserves to be singled out, especially since it resonates strongly with the critical instance of the beloved (Mahāśvetā) savagely cursing her unrecognized lover (Puṇḍarīka reborn as Vaiśampāyana). Such things happen in the *Kādambarī*. Latent aggression, extreme in effect, is built into the love relation and usually has to be externalized. Model A (Candrâpīḍa + Kādambarī) also has it. In short, there is something actively wrong in the intimate erotic connection depicted in both these models, and the book sets out to explore these distinctive complexities.

I hope by now I have said enough to generate at least a little confusion: Who are these people, anyway? Better, who are they at any particular moment? The two women, Kādambarī and Mahāśvetā, turn out to be, for the most part, singular and stable, maintaining only one name and one continuous persona each, unlike their male partners. In itself, this perspective on gender is worth noting. Male identity is a diffuse, vulnerable, unreliable business; female identity, though exposed to severe, even life-threatening suffering, has a better potential for long-term survival and is, or seems to be, somewhat better "integrated," to use an anachronistic word. Perhaps I should add that erotic passion itself—

5. See Wilden 2009; *Nāṭya-śāstra* 24.168–71. It is, in fact, very rare to encounter a case of stage 10.

kāma, manmatha, anaṅga, and so on—is constantly personified in this book as a wild, capricious, dangerous, unfettered, invisible (disembodied) male. That is as far as I want to go in this essay in observing gender.

Here, then, are the bare bones of the story, streamlined and rearranged so as to suit one kind of temporal sequence. There is a king, Śūdraka, in Vidiśā. One day a beautiful Cāṇḍāla/Untouchable girl turns up in his court with a talking parrot who has a story to tell. The parrot also has an appropriate name—Vaiśampāyana, the name of one of the great epic reciter/storytellers in ancient India. The parrot had a traumatic childhood, to say the least; his mother died in childbirth, and his father was killed by a rapacious Śabara hunter; the baby parrot himself barely survived. He was found and adopted by the sage Jābāli, who told him and a circle of close disciples at great length, in lush Sanskrit prose, about this young parrot's previous lives. It is this story that the parrot now relates to King Śūdraka. Please note: we have here the two or three outermost frames of the book. The *Kādambarī* is told to us by its author(s), who are, in theory, simply transmitting to us a transcript of the parrot's tale to the king, itself a transcript of Jābāli's earlier narration in the forest. Let us call these frames F1, F2, and F3.

Now we start again. There is a king, Tārâpīḍa, "Star-crowned," in Ujjayinī, with an adolescent prince, Candrâpīḍa, "Moon-crowned" (an epithet suitable for Lord Śiva). The king has a minister, Śukanāsa ("Parrot's Beak"), who has a son, Vaiśampāyana. The prince and the minister's sons are the very closest of friends. They are sent off on an expedition to conquer the world, despite the fact that the king has already conquered all of it; apparently, one has to do this from time to time. After three years on the road, in the far north-east of the subcontinent, Candrâpīḍa, riding his horse Indrâyudha ("Rainbow"), is entranced by a pair of *kinnara* lovers and follows them for a long distance until he reaches Lake Clearwater (Acchoda). On its bank he hears music that is coming from a lonely, radiant woman living a fiercely ascetic existence there. She takes Candrâpīḍa to her cave, feeds him and, when pressed by him to identify herself, says she is Mahāśvetā and tells her story (this is F4, ostensibly the most deeply embedded layer of narration).

Let us start again. Mahāśvetā, born to the Gandharva Haṃsa and the Apsara Gaurī, falls in love with a young ascetic named Puṇḍarīka, who lives on Mount Hemakūṭa together with his good friend Kapiñjala. Puṇḍarīka is the son of the famous sage Śvetaketu and the fickle goddess of splendor and prosperity, Lakṣmī.[6]

6. To be precise—and precision counts for everything when we are dealing with these intricate genealogies and the genetic code they transmit to their offspring—the goddess conceived Puṇḍarīka merely by looking at Śvetaketu while the latter was collecting flowers in a river. This more or less auto-impregnation by the female is said to explain Puṇḍarīka's somewhat flighty, unstable character.

As already mentioned, Puṇḍarīka is somewhat conflicted by his own passionate feelings for Mahāśvetā; he dies of love, and as he dies he curses the Moon, whose cool rays have inflamed his desire further (much later we will discover that the Moon, somewhat irritated by this gratuitous curse, curses Puṇḍarīka to suffer commensurately in further rebirths). Mahāśvetā arrives in the wilderness to find her lover dead; she decides to live on, tormented by longing, to perform the Pāśupata vow to Śiva. But she is present when a radiant white male emerges from the moon and descends from the sky to claim Puṇḍarīka's body, which he carries off to heaven with Kapiñjala in hot pursuit. This Moon-Man promises Mahāśvetā, as he departs with the body, that one day she will be reunited with her beloved.

It so happens that Mahāśvetā has a close friend named Kādambarī, another Apsara ultimately descended from the moon; more immediately, she is the daughter of the Gandharva Citraratha and Madirā (we are back in F3). Kādambarī is so devoted to her friend that she has somewhat rashly sworn not to marry so long as Mahāśvetā is grieving. The oath is now put to test, because Mahāśvetā introduces Candrâpīḍa, her erstwhile listener, to Kādambarī, and the two fall in love. More precisely, as stated earlier, Kādambarī falls head over heels in love while Candrâpīḍa can't quite figure out what he is feeling. There are two meetings, and then a letter arrives from Candrâpīḍa's father recalling him immediately to Ujjayinī: "The end of this letter should be the moment of your departure homeward." Off he goes, leaving Kādambarī dangling, and not stopping to say goodbye.

Remember Vaiśampāyana, Candrâpīḍa's friend? He, too, arrives with a small contingent at Lake Clearwater and is overwhelmed by feelings he can't account for. When the whole army sets off on its return march to Ujjayinī, Vaiśampāyana stays behind at the lake. He meets Mahāśvetā and feels all the old feelings he felt for her when he was Puṇḍarīka, and he unabashedly expresses this passion in her presence. Mahāśvetā, obsessed with her grief and her vow, is incensed by Vaiśampāyana's words; she naturally fails to recognize him as her lover reborn, and she curses him to fall into another birth in which he will no longer desire a woman like her. At once, Vaiśampāyana, a.k.a. Puṇḍarīka, falls dead once more.

Meanwhile, Candrâpīḍa, back home in Ujjayinī, and lacerating himself for his rather uncivil and silent departure from Kādambarī, learns that Vaiśampāyana has stayed behind at Lake Clearwater. No one in the Ujjayinī palace can understand this irrational, even lunatic behavior. Candrâpīḍa sets off at once to bring his friend back to his senses and home to his parents. He arrives too late at Lake Clearwater: Mahāśvetā, grieving now, has to break the news that Vaiśampāyana is dead because of her curse (or perhaps, she says, hopefully, because of his own

evil deed or because of terminal love-sickness). Candrâpīḍa's heart bursts and he, too, dies, more or less.

It is all very tragic, of course, and gets worse with the arrival of Kādambarī and then of Candrâpīḍa's parents; Tārâpīḍa, Candrâpīḍa's father, renounces the world then and there. However, there is a ray of hope. A voice from heaven announces that Kādambarī's touch will keep Candrâpīḍa's ever more luminous body from decaying; she is to stay beside it, guarding it, until her lover is restored to life. We can leave her like that, with Candrâpīḍa's feet resting in her lap—for this is the point where Jābāli's narrative (F3) comes to an end. In fact, we have reached one possible conclusion to the entire book. Jābāli, reflecting upon what he has just recited at such great length to his disciples and to the parrot, has this to say: *dṛṣṭam āyuṣmadbhir idam antaḥ-karaṇâpahārinaḥ kathā-rasasyâkṣepa-sāmarthyam. yat kathayituṃ pravṛtto 'smi tat parityajyaiva kathā-rasāt kathayann ati-dūram ati-krānto 'smi*, "You see what power to transport, to carry away the heart, this charming story possesses. That which I planned to narrate I abandoned and, because of the enchantment of the tale, let the telling get out of hand."[7] One can only wonder what exactly Jābāli had intended to narrate but, carried away by the story's autonomous energy, he then abandoned. We are back to the riddling nature of the master narrative, nicely articulated by one of its main (internal) tellers.

But Vaiśampāyana, the eloquent parrot, still has a few things to report (F2). Hearing Jābāli's long story, he suddenly, as if waking from a dream, remembers everything, including both his intense love for Mahāśvetā and his close bond with Candrâpīḍa (these spread over two not-entirely-separate births). He is restless and wants to fly away to be with Candrâpīḍa, though his wings are still immature. Jābāli chides him for this instability, the inevitable result of his having been born only from a woman's seed, as the Āyurveda teaches us. Eventually, after his wings do grow and after an encouraging visit by his old friend Kapiñjala (fresh from a visit with the parrot's father, Śvetaketu), Vaiśampāyana does take off, only to alight for rest in a grove close to an Untouchable village. He is captured by one of the Cāṇḍālas and handed over to the beautiful Cāṇḍāla girl who, as we know, is the one who has brought him in a golden cage to King Śūdraka's court. We have now reached the outer limit of F2.

The poet (Bhūṣaṇa—or Bāṇa himself?) has to fill in the rest of the details (F1). The Caṇḍāla girl turns out to be the goddess Lakṣmī, sent by Vaiśampāyana/Puṇḍarīka's father to look after him in the mortal world. She addresses Śūdraka as the Moon and the apple of Kādambarī's eye—for he is, indeed, the further incarnation of both Candra and Candrâpīḍa. The epithets jog his memory,

7. *Kādambarī* 674; Layne 333.

and he is filled—once again, for nothing ever happens in this book for the first time—with all-consuming passion for Kādambarī. Within a few days, both he and the parrot are burnt up by the fire of desire intensified to its highest pitch. By this time, it is the spring month of Madhu, and Kādambarī, still faithfully serving the gleaming body of her lover Candrâpīḍa, suddenly cannot resist embracing him as if he were alive: and indeed, at this moment of surrender, he comes alive in her arms. Puṇḍarīka descends from the skies to embrace the patient Mahāśvetā. Marriages will follow along with the sometimes awkward fusion of disparate selves; the parents of Vaiśampāyana A have to get used to recognizing him in Puṇḍarīka, for example, to say nothing of Candrâpīḍa -Śūdraka-Candra's attempt to reclaim some kind of continuous identity. An enduring moonlight drenches the universe with the promise of quasi-immortality. "And not only the moon god with Kādambarī, but Kādambarī with Mahāśvetā, Mahāśvetā with Puṇḍarīka, Puṇḍarīka with the moon good—all with mutual union, at all times, with all enjoyments, reached the climax of ecstasy."[8]

We could rearrange the story even more severely, in the interests of simple reference, starting at its earliest chronological point. Mahāśvetā loves and loses Puṇḍarīka, whose body is carried off to heaven by a Moon-Man. Candrâpīḍa stumbles upon Mahāśvetā, hears her story, and is introduced by her to Kādambarī, who immediately loves him. He leaves her and goes home, but when his friend Vaiśampāyana does not turn up, Candrâpīḍa heads north again to find him. When he discovers that Vaiśampāyana has died, Candrâpīḍa also dies of grief. Kādambarī tends to the body of her lover and, when spring comes, kisses him back to life. Kapiñjala, until recently Candrâpīḍa's horse Rainbow, identifies both Vaiśampāyanas (A and B—first, Candrâpīḍa's friend, then the narrator-parrot) with Puṇḍarīka, and also Candrâpīḍa himself with the Moon, who also happens to be Śūdraka, the internal audience of the tale. Once Śūdraka recognizes himself, through hearing the story, as Candrâpīḍa/Candra, with his love for Kādambarī still intact, he dies of longing. The parrot suffers a similar fate. This is the moment of Kādambarī's revivifying kiss: the two male protagonists, Puṇḍarīka and Candrâpīḍa, are united with their two beloveds, Mahāśvetā and Kādambarī respectively. I guess we can say it is a happy ending.

If you would like a diagram:

Moon = Candrâpīḍa = Śūdraka
Puṇḍarīka = Vaiśampāyana A = Vaiśampāyana B (the parrot)
Kapiñjala = Indrâyudha, the horse
Lakṣmī, goddess of fortune = the Untouchable girl from the forest

8. K 711; Layne 352.

Mahāśvetā = Mahāśvetā
Kādambarī = Kādambarī

The latter two, however, are both descended from the Moon, who thus curses the lover (Puṇḍarīka) of his own great-granddaughter. The primary mechanism underlying the whole mad progression is the mutual curse of Puṇḍarīka and the Moon, each of whom has to undergo at least two rebirths that are, however, not fully synchronized. As so often, hearing the story and recovering the lost memory-traces release the protagonists from the curse. In a way, as far as the heroes are concerned, we see a progression from three to two to one—in Puṇḍarīka's case, three coinciding with two (the two Vaiśampāyanas) who are, of course, one; in the case of Candrâpīḍa, with the Moon informing his very name, we have two Moon-Men merging, dead or alive, with Śūdraka, and all three with the primary white lunar being who encompasses them all. If one wanted to explore chromatic sequencing, then the story is a flood of brilliant whiteness repeatedly fractured and reconstituted—as the Moon and his rays, as the white lotus Puṇḍarīka, as the "Great White" heroine Mahāśvetā, and so on—that has eventually to be conjoined at its core with the crimson wine that is Kādambarī, for this is one prominent meaning of her name.[9] After many false attempts and repeated failures, white and red find a temporary balance.

C. Sources, Models, Telos

As I have said, I am not sure anyone keeps all these relations straight for very long. It is even possible that they do not matter all that much. What does matter is the almost constant experience of the listener, whether internal to the text (Śūdraka in F2, or the parrot in F3) or external to it, that is, the reader savoring any given moment. For all these listeners, it is as if someone were whispering: "Remember this?" Or, less explicitly, as if there were an inner voice saying, "There is something more, something not apparent or accessible, going on here, just past the tip of my tongue, something deeper than all the pieces of myself that I normally identify as 'me'." In itself, this sensation is nothing new in Sanskrit literature; in fact, it might be said to be the axiological norm. But I think Bāṇa has taken it in a certain, rather unusual direction, discovering along the way very striking meta-poetic and meta-linguistic features and inventing a supple style that is perfectly correlated to this kind of sensation. Here we have a wide arena for analysis.

9. But *kādambarī* is also a kind of cream or creamy film over milk or curds.

But let us begin with a simple structural observation. The entire story is built around two familiar folktales or folktale templates. There is the South Asian variant of AT 437, the Supplanted Bride, best attested in the Kannada tale of the princess who tends the dead or dormant body of her husband-to-be for 12 years.[10] And then we have the case of the lover who is so obsessed with a fantasy of his absent beloved that he fails to notice her when she stands before him.[11] These two templates are distributed between the two heroines: Kādambarī enacts the first (including the kiss of life, as in Sleeping Beauty), while Mahāśvetā lives out the second—with the not unexpected twist that her lover, Puṇḍarīka, is perhaps not so easily recognized because he has meanwhile been reborn as Vaiśampāyana A. The problem of recognition is, in any case, fundamental to the dénoument of Bāṇa's work, as I have said. We might thus think of the *Kādambarī* as the *kāvya*-ization of pre-existing story materials drawn, almost certainly, from oral sources. These materials tend to find their ways into the sophisticated *kathā* strata of the tradition—we have already noted that both Kṣemendra and Somadeva give us versions of our story—and thus Bāṇa's romance, rather like Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, marks an appropriation by *kāvya* of an urban, trans-local imaginary, projected onto a courtly setting, and quite distinct from the epic and Purāṇic sources that also feed into mid-first-millennium *kāvya* production.

We can go a step further, however, toward understanding Bāṇa's recycling of these tale templates. It was no mechanical business. In fact, as I have said, the story alone is possibly the least significant component of the *Kādambarī*; it does little good to say that Bāṇa has improvised an immensely detailed descriptive tour de force around a relatively simple core-narrative, in which a princess keeps watch over a corpse that eventually revives and becomes her lover. You have to read Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa's portrait of Kādambarī in this state in order to appreciate the deeper currents flowing through the *uttarabhāga*. Many have noted the pointed, extended vignette Bāṇa offers of a slightly incongruous south Indian Śaiva ascetic, a worshipper of the goddess, whom Candrâpīḍa meets on his way home from the Himâlayas (near the end of the *pūrva-bhāga*). Put these two segments, divided by Bāṇa's "death," together, and you begin to see a quasi-allegorical register at work in the *Kādambarī* as a whole. The book becomes a story of yogic or alchemical healing, esoteric and "Tantric," if you will; Kādambarī, the wine-soaked heroine, now embodies both the pragmatics of a ritual drama aimed at reviving the dead and the epistemology that necessarily accompanies such praxis. Once again, there is the business of recognition, including self-recognition—and we should note that the entire book moves toward precisely such a ritual moment as its natural conclusion. This, then, is a story about what

10. Ramanujan 1997, 38–43, with Blackburn's comparative notes (238).

11. Ramanujan 1991, 239–40; Idel 2002, linking the theme with Diotima.

it takes to bring someone, especially someone who has forgotten his or her true nature, back to life. A vital red is reborn within a luxuriance of pacific white.

Still, I hasten to add that the *Kādambarī* is not, at its base, an allegory. It has evocative, proto-allegorical strands, no more than that. They add a certain color to the bare bones of the tale template; indeed, they turn it into something of much wider, and far more specific significance than the tales as we know them (much as the Mediterranean versions of the second template—the lover so much in love with his or her fantasy that he or she fails to recognize the flesh-and-blood beloved—move in the direction of a powerful philosophical statement: the soul, refined through ascetic meditation, no longer sees its material embodiment).[12] But the profound aesthetic impact of the *Kādambarī* on any reader open to the magic of Bāṇa's style is in no way dependent on such perceptions. Healing, we might say, if it is indeed thematized in the work, must happen in another mode.

D. The Yoga of Syntax

On the surface, Bāṇa's language looks like an extreme hypotaxis—long embedded clauses strung in chains, sometimes in branching formations with secondary and tertiary embeddedness, and eventually clarified syntactically by the emergence (usually at the end of the sentence) of some finite verb. On closer inspection, the classic Auerbachian division between hypotaxis and parataxis, with their respective ontologies, dissolves. Most of the hypotactic clauses turn out to be a simple cumulation: X + X + X + X ⋯ > Y (often in locative or instrumental case), where nearly every X is an exogenous (*bahuvrīhi*) compound. Without the *bahuvrīhi*, the *Kādambarī* prose style would not be possible, to say nothing of the pervasive bi-textual effects that this style allows or, indeed, demands. The overall effect is, on the one hand, one of astonishing and inventive cumulation, very much in the paratactic mode of addition: one more attribute, and then another, and yet another, until the impulse to characterize and compare is momentarily exhausted. On the other hand, these cumulating series, very often building up through extended bi-textual similes or *iva*-clauses, invariably have strong musical and rhythmic effects. It would not be difficult to produce a table of the dominant rhythmic patterns; any trained percussionist could do it even without knowing Sanskrit.[13] In general, a "natural" recurrent beat (*ictus*) slowly intensifies, reaches

12. Ramanujan 1991, 239–40; Idel 2002.

13. Perhaps this is what Gaṅgādevī meant when she wrote: *vāṇī-pāṇi-parāmṛṣṭa-vīṇā-nikvāṇa-hāriṇīm/ bhāvayanti kathaṃ vânye bhaṭṭa-bāṇasya bhāratīm//* "How could anyone else bring into existence the style of Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa, more ravishing than the melody of the vina plucked by Sarasvatī's own hands" (see Krishnamacariar 1970, 448).

a crescendo, and suddenly subsides into a series of short rhythmic strokes. For example:

> *praviśya ca sā nara-pati-sahasra-madhya-vartinam aśani-bhaya-puñjita-kula-śaila-madhya-gatam iva kanaka-śikharinam aneka-ratnâbharaṇa-kiraṇa-jālakântaritâvayavam indrâyudha-sahasra-saṃchāditâṣṭa-dig-bhāgam iva jala-dhara-divasam ... indra-nīla-maṇi-kuṭṭima-prabhā-saṃparka-śyāmāyamānaiḥ praṇata-ripu-niḥśvāsa-malinī-kṛtair iva caraṇa-nakha-mayūkha-jālair upaśobhamānam.... āyata-locanam api sūkṣma-darśanam mahādoṣam api sakala-guṇâdhiṣṭhānam kupitam api kalatra-vallabham, a-virata-pravṛtta-dānam apy a-madam atyanta-śuddha-svabhāvam api kṛṣṇa-caritam a-karam api hasta-sthita-bhuvana-talam rājānam adrākṣīt/*
>
> On entering, she [the Cāṇḍāla girl] saw the king seated in the midst of a myriad of princes such that he looked like the Golden-crested Mountain surrounded by the Kula Mountains cowering together from fear of lightning bolts. His limbs were enveloped in the network of light rays shooting out from his many jeweled ornaments, making him appear to be a day in the rainy season when the world is swathed in thousands of rainbows.... His other foot was made lustrous by the shimmering light from his toenails that, darkened by the glow of the sapphire pavement, looked as though they were misted over by the melancholy sighings of his humbled foes.... Although his eyes were far-seeing, he saw the most subtle things. Although he had great faults [long arms], he was the abode of all virtues. Although he was a bad husband [was king of the earth], he was beloved of his consorts. Although his ichor [generosity] oozed constantly, he was not maddened with rut. Although his behavior was black [that of Kṛṣṇa], his character was pure. Although he had no hands [levied no taxes], he held the earth in his grasp. The maiden gazed at him....[14]

There is a hypnotic quality to this kind of rhythm, perhaps balanced, to some extent, by the lexical richness of each sequence, by the creative figuration worked through in the similes and *rūpaka*s and often, somewhat surprisingly, by meticulous naturalistic observation. More on the latter in a moment. Note that in Sanskrit the passage just quoted is a single long sentence (I have given only a small excerpt), and a very simple one at that: "She entered and saw the king,"

14. K 16–29; Layne 10–12.

with the direct object (*rājānam*) modified by a seemingly endless series of descriptive compounds and their attached similes, a series that eventually collapses into the staccato bursts of bi-textual attributes that signal to the reader or listener that the sentence is, after all, however unlikely this might seem, about to end.

This is not to say that the reader can simply relax as one clause is piled on another; the very cumulation generates a strong syntactic suspense. One waits, often impatiently, for the finite verb that will at last make sense of the whole long series; and in the meantime, you have to keep in your mind the primary syntactic coordinates that are slowly—often very slowly—moving toward this longed-for resolution. Much of the beauty of the language derives precisely from this drawn-out, intensifying suspense followed by the experience of relief or release when the sentence finally coagulates around the verb. It sometimes feels like holding your breath as the mind is flooded by continually ramifying, vivid images, internally resonant and inter-locking, until the moment when the finite verb allows you to breathe out and in again—a Yoga of Syntax. Occasionally, the author gives us, in a compassionate moment, a whole string of short, immediately intelligible, though always beautifully crafted mini-sentences:

[Candrâpīḍa to Mahāśvetā:]

kataran marutām ṛṣīṇāṃ gandharvāṇāṃ guhyakānām apsarasāṃ vā kulam anugṛhītaṃ bhagavatyā janmanā/ kim-arthaṃ vâsmin kusuma-sukumāre nave vayasi vrata-grahaṇam/ kvedam vayaḥ kvedaṃ tapaḥ kveyam ākṛtiḥ kva câyaṃ lāvaṇyâtiśayaḥ kveyam indriyāṇām upaśāntiḥ/ tad adbhutam iva me pratibhāti/ kiṃ vâneka-siddha-sādhya-saṃ baddhāni sura-loka-sulabhāny apahāya divyâśrama-padāny ekākinī vanam idam amānuṣam adhivasasi/ kaś câyaṃ prakāro yat tair eva pañcabhir mahābhūtair ārabdham īdṛśaṃ dhvalatāṃ dhatte śarīram/ nedam asmābhir anyatra dṛṣṭa-śruta-pūrvaṃ vā/ apanayatu naḥ kautukam/ āvedayatu bhavatī sarvam idam/

Which family of gods, sages, Gandharvas, Guhyakas, or Apsaras has been favored by your birth? Why have you taken a vow at such an early age when you are blossom-tender? From where comes this youth! From where comes this form! From where comes this transcendent loveliness and this tranquility of senses! All this seems to me quite wonderful. Why do you live alone in this uninhabited forest, avoiding divine hermitages accessible in the Celestial World frequented by many Siddhas and Sadhyas? And how is it that your body possesses such whiteness, though it be composed of the five Great Elements? I have never seen nor heard of such a thing

> anywhere else before. Please satisfy my need to know and tell me everything.[15]

Such moments are invariably followed by the kind of long *bahuvrīhi*-based strings, sometimes extended over pages, described earlier.

As already intimated, one somewhat unexpected result of this sort of syntactic invention, once you have become accustomed to it, is a sense of remarkable, almost primitive simplicity. The typical *Kādambarī* sentence is infinitely simpler, structurally, than most everyday prose sentences; simpler also, by far, than the kind of deliberately disjointed or scrambled syntax we find in good Sanskrit poetry, as in Śrīharṣa and Māgha (or, for that matter, even in Kālidāsa, the inventor of the complex syntactic norms for poetry). Yet the fact of multiple embedded sequences, however straightforward they look in the end, has its own expressive force. In a certain sense, such parataxis-masked-as-hypotaxis reflects quite precisely the way the narrative itself is put together and, no less precisely, the way the identity of the major characters is articulated. Both Candrâpīḍa-Candra-Śūdraka and Puṇḍarīka-Vaiśampāyana A and B are sequential, cumulative, add-on beings fusing into an apparent (possibly misleading) unity only at the final moment of the tale. Auerbach might have been pleased, his curiosity piqued, by this conclusion. Recall that in Auerbach's own famous argument, parataxis tends toward under-signification, leaving large, unillumined gaps in which suggestion and imagination have room to do their work.[16]

Now think again about the hiatus built into the very structure of the book and the "hung" conclusion that it allows or requires. Two-thirds of the way through, the author dies, immediately after composing the telling phrase *jñāsyasi maraṇena prītim ity asaṃbhāvyam*, "'You will know my love by my death' is simply impossible." The phrase comes at the end of a long list of impossible messages that Kādambarī considers, but then decides against, sending to the far-away Candrâpīḍa.[17] Herman Tieken has drawn attention to the more or less unbelievable coincidence that this phrase coincides with Bāṇa's own demise.[18] We will return to this issue, but for the moment it may suffice to say that Bāṇa's death simulates to perfection the anxiety of the reader faced with Bāṇa's never-ending sentences: Will he or she, the reader, live to the end of the sentence? Will it complete itself hypotactically or trail off into the void of uncertainty and incompletion? Or, on another level: Will the author live to the end of his book?

15. K 291–92; Layne 139.
16. Auerbach 1957, 1–20. See the remarkable elaboration of this notion by Weiskel.
17. K 490; Layne 236.
18. Tieken, in this volume.

Since we are talking of iconicity operating on several levels simultaneously, this is the place to remark on the tremendous iconic effects that Bāṇa's Sanskrit regularly produces. There are examples on every page. Listen, for example, to the way the Śabara hunters come rampaging through the forest:

atha nâticirād evânulepanârdra-mṛdaṅga-dhvani-dhīreṇa giri-vivara-vijṛmbhita-prati-nāda-gambhīreṇa śabara-śara-tāḍitānāṃ kesariṇāṃ nināde na saṃtrasta-yūtha-muktānām ekākināṃ ca saṃcaratām ana-varata-karâsphoṭamiśreṇa jala-dhara-rasitânukāriṇā gaja-yūtha-patīnāṃ kaṇṭha-garjitena sa-rabhasa-sārameya-vilupyamānâvayavānām ālola-tarala-tārakāṇām eṇakānāṃ ca karuṇa-kūjitena nihata-yūtha-patīnāṃ viyoginīnām anugata-kalabhānāṃ ca sthitvā sthitvā samākarṇya kalaka-lam utkarṇa-pallavānām itas tataḥ pari-bhramantīnāṃ pratyagra-pati-vināśa-śoka-dīrgheṇa kariṇīnām cīt-kṛtena kati-paya-divasa-prasūtānāṃ ca khaḍgi-dhenukānāṃ trāsa-paribhraṣṭa-potakânveṣiṇīnām unmukta-kaṇṭham ārasantīnām ākranditena taru-śikhara-samutpatitānām ākulâkula-cāriṇāṃ ca patra-rathānāṃ kolāhalena rūpânusāra-pradhāvitānāṃ ca mṛga-yūthānāṃ yugapad-ati-rabhasa-pāda-pātâbhihatāyā bhuvaḥ kampam iva janayatā caraṇa-śabdena karṇântâkṛṣṭa-jyānāṃ ca mada-kala-kurara-kāminī-kaṇṭha-kūjita-kala-śabalitena śara-nikara-varṣiṇāṃ dhanuṣāṃ ninādena pavanâhati-kvaṇita-dhārāṇām asīnāṃ ca kaṭhina-mahiṣa-skandha-pīṭha-pātināṃ raṇitena śunāṃ ca sa-rabhasa-vimukta-gharghara-dhvanīnāṃ vanântara-vyāpinā dhvānena sarvataḥ pracalitam iva tad araṇyam abhavat

In a short time that forest seemed to be shattered everywhere by noise. The roar of lions struck by Śabara arrows was deep as the boom of an oiled *mṛdaṅga* drum and swelled as it echoed and reverberated through the mountain chasms. Trumpeting from the throats of lead elephants, separated from their frightened herds and wandering alone, mingled with the incessant slaps of their trunks and imitated the thunder of storm clouds. Woeful cries were wrenched from deer as their soft dewy eyes rolled in terror and their bodies were hideously ripped by dogs. The *cīt-cīt* sound of female elephants was prolonged by their grief at the recent loss of their lords; separated from their slain lead elephants, followed by their young, they wandered hither and yon, pausing now and then with flower-ears erect listening to the *kalakala* of the commotion. Lamentations of piteously crying female rhinoceros issued forth in

> terror to their lost offspring begotten only a few days earlier. A *kolāhala* sound was made by the wings of birds fluttering down from treetops and wandering about in confusion. The thundering footfalls of hunters seemed to shake the earth as they hurried after the fleeing animals. Bowstrings were drawn to ears, and the ensuing twang—as melodious as soft cries from throats of impassioned female ospreys—signaled a rain of arrows. Sword blades whined through the air and thudded heavily upon the solid shoulders of buffalos. The hoarse *ghar-ghar* of unleashed hounds filled the whole of the wood.[19]

One cannot help but note the presence of overtly onomatopoetic lexemes in this not atypical sentence; you only have to listen to the relentlessly intensifying sounds in recitation to be able to take in the Śabara raid in all its concrete, tangible, audible effects. Bāṇa is by no means the first Sanskrit poet to paint in sounds, but he is surely one of the most gifted. One marvels at the one-to-one correspondence of visual and aural experience and at the syntactic compression that makes it possible, even as it makes it virtually *impossible* for the oral reciter to breathe naturally. He or she gasps for breath just as the young parrot must have gasped in terror. Interestingly, this pronounced, cultivated iconicity—we might even be tempted to speak of sound *superseding* ordinary semantics[20]—seems to co-exist very comfortably with impressive naturalistic observations. Thus, we see the deer slowly coming awake at dawn, their eyes still stuck together as if covered with hot lac, and the fur on their bellies grey from having spent the night sleeping in salty, grassless hollows;[21] similarly, the dogs of the Śabara hunters appear vividly, starkly, to our eyes—their dry, pink tongues sticking out, hairs of their prey stuck between their teeth—and the skin of the Śabara chief himself is dark on one side but a little reddish on the other, perhaps because he sleeps on a bed of leaves and red buds;[22] we are reminded that the bright color of the day-lotus deepens and darkens to a dusky red-purple during a cloudburst.[23] And so on. Precise, detailed references and thick descriptions continuously combine with figures so intense that an almost hallucinatory, sometimes lurid, often surreal vision of the world materializes under the impact of a dense, iconic, musically driven syntax.

19. K. 61–62; Layne 29–30.
20. As we have argued for Śrīnātha: Narayana Rao and Shulman 2012.
21. K 57 (a particularly lovely formulation).
22. K 64–66.
23. K 493.

E. What Words Can Do

We can go a little further in this rich domain of Bāṇa's prose and its burdens. Like so many great *kāvya* works, the *Kādambarī* very readily opens itself up to meta-linguistic and meta-poetic reflections. Indeed, at many points throughout the text the author gently slips into a self-conscious mode in which he offers pointed observations on the way language—especially the language of courtly politesse so prevalent in the main characters' speech—charms and beguiles, sometimes to deadly effect. He knows about the gap between words and thought/feeling (*vāṅ-manasayor bhinnârthatva*).[24] His hero Candrâpīḍa has made a science of speaking with an exquisite ambiguity (*a-vyakta-vyāhāra*) that torments Kādambarī; but he, too, is tormented, his mind swinging back and forth when he hears a message about his beloved that can be understood in more than one way (*ubhayathā-ghaṭamānârthatā*).[25] In fact, we would be quite justified in claiming that the entire book works along these lines and is set up to do so—to intoxicate and baffle the reader with polished words and their phonic mysteries and to lead him or her into a zone of stratified experience shaped by different rules than those that govern our usual processes of thought. Within that zone, subtle nuances of feeling are the only reliable and continuous points of reference, immune to death itself; but they appear to our ears and eyes only in translation to a verbal medium that, by definition, dissembles and leads astray. We have already seen how Jābāli, one of the principle internal narrators, is "transported" or "carried away" by the charm of his own story (*kathā-rasasyâkṣepa-sāmarthya*), to the point that "that which I planned to narrate I abandoned and, because of the enchantment of the tale, let the telling get out of hand."

There is, we could conclude, something remarkably resilient, autonomous, and possibly open-ended about the narrative component of the *Kādambarī*; also something playful on principle, as we see from the short meta-poetic insert about Parihāsa and Kālindī offered to us at the moment when Candrâpīḍa is first introduced to Kādambarī. In the midst of the awkward effusion of feeling inherent to that first meeting, the heroine's pet mynah bird Kālindī storms into the room. The bird is indignant and jealous, since that same morning she caught sight of her "husband," the parrot Parihāsa—his name means "joke"—teaching Kādambarī's maid and betel-box carrier Tamālikā something or other in private. The mynah threatens suicide if Kādambarī won't keep the pesky parrot away from her. Candrâpīḍa leaps at the opportunity to say something elegant, amusing, and—just possibly—keyed to the situation he finds himself in at the

24. K 451.
25. K 448–49.

moment, with a beautiful woman, whom he hardly knows and certainly does not yet trust, clearly head over heels in love with him. He has, he says, like everyone else, heard about the secret rendezvous between the parrot and the maid. The fault, in his view, lies mostly with Kādambarī: Why did she marry off the mynah to such a crude, undependable fellow in the first place? Anyway, the mynah is perfectly right to be offended, since there is nothing worse for a woman than to be dumped by one's lover in favor of some rival. If the mynah now allows herself to be appeased by the parrot's sweet-talk, she, the mynah, should be banished in disgrace.[26]

This impromptu speech by Candrâpīḍa is a playful tour de force (*krīḍâlāpa*); Kādambarī and all her maid-servants giggle happily in response. Part of the delight lies in the way Candrâpīḍa has taken as perfectly normal, indeed literalized, a liaison between a talking parrot and a woman. Under these circumstances, he is on the mynah's side. Which is more absurd—the mynah's complaint (in human language) or the seriousness with which Candrâpīḍa addresses it? The only problem is that Candrâpīḍa has adumbrated, probably unwittingly, his own less than noble course of action and feeling vis-à-vis his new beloved. He will continue to speak seductively to Kādambarī and to lead her along, but he may already have a vague inkling of how dangerous to her he will be—of the suffering his doubt will cause her. It is all very funny when we are talking about the mismatched love of a mynah and a smooth-tongued parrot; not so funny when we see the template played out at length on the grand stage of Bāṇa's *kāvya*. Let me say it again: words matter, both as music and as discrete meaning-bearing entities with a life of their own. They deserve careful attention in both these primary aspects of their nature. So, despite all the impressive iconic effects that I have tried to demonstrate, despite the flood of sheer linguistic music and its rhythms, and the expressivity inherent in the syntactic patterns of Bāṇa's sentences, there remains in his text a level in which old-fashioned, semantically charged speech matters enormously. Indeed, rarely have the polyvalence and semantic over-saturation of human language been stated so acutely as when Candrâpīḍa takes in the devastating report of Kādambarī's messenger, Patralekhā:

> *Candrâpīḍas tu tathopâlambha-garbhaṃ vijñaptaḥ patralekhayā taṃ ca kādambaryāḥ snehokti-puraḥsaraṃ ca gambhīraṃ ca sa-tāpaṃ ca sa-parihāsaṃ ca sâbhyarthanaṃ ca sâbhimānaṃ ca sâvalehaṃ ca sa-prasādaṃ ca sa-nirvedaṃ ca sânurāgaṃ ca sa-kopaṃ ca sa-nirviśeṣaṃ ca sâvaṣṭambhaṃ ca sâtmârpaṇaṃ ca sotprāsaṃ ca sotpâlambhaṃ ca sânukrośaṃ ca sa-spṛhaṃ ca sâvadhāraṇaṃ ca madhuram api duḥśravaṃ sa-rasam api śoṣa-hetuṃ komalam api kaṭhoraṃ namram*

26. K 402–05; Layne 194–96.

apy unnataṃ peśalam apy ahaṅkṛtam lalitam api prauḍham ālāpam ākarṇyotprekṣyotprekṣya ca stimita-pakṣmatayā dur-viṣaha-duḥkha-bāṣpopaplutâyatâkṣaṃ tan-mukhaṃ sva-bhāva-dhīra-prakṛtir api nitarāṃ paryākulo 'bhavat//

Now Candrâpīḍa listened to Patralekhā's words, filled with reproach for him and with words of love for Kādambarī—those words that carried hidden meanings and that were full of sorrow, ridicule, entreaty, pride, disdain, benevolence, aversion, passion, anger, decisiveness, resolve, dedication, derision, censure, tenderness, desire, and assurance. Though sweet, they were unpleasant [cacophonous]; though charming [juicy], they caused dryness; though tender, they were hard; though humble, they were noble; though gracious, they were proud; and though artless, they were mature. And imagining her face—its long eyes streaming tears of intolerable grief, its lashes sodden—though he was by nature imperturbable, Candrâpīḍa became completely unhinged.[27]

It seems that language at its most powerful and most complex—*kāvya*—can stir the listener to the point of madness.

F. I'm Still Me

This last passage belongs to the critical moment of transition after Bāṇa's "death" and Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa's resumption of the narrative. It is time for us to enter a little more deeply into this gap. Patralekhā has arrived in Ujjayinī with an ambiguous message—actually, more of an eloquent non-message—from Kādambarī, who is on the verge of going to pieces in the absence of her beloved Candâpīḍa. We saw earlier the final sentence in Kādambarī's non-message: *jñāsyasi maraṇena prītim ity asaṃbhāvyam*, "'You will know my love by my death' is simply impossible." (In other words, Patralekhā has been told by Kādambarī "not" to quote this sentence to Candrâpīḍa, though of course Patralekhā proceeds to do just that). This is the point at which Bāṇa is said to have died. His son resumes the narrative after a brief poetic introduction beginning with the following invocation verse:

deha-dvayârdha-ghaṭanā-racitaṃ śarīram ekaṃ yayor anupalakṣita-sandhi-bhedam/
vande su-dur-ghaṭa-kathā-pariśeṣa-siddhyai sṛṣṭer gurū giri-sutā-parameśvarau tau//

27. K 496–97; Layne 241–42.

In service to the untangling of this knotty tale
I bow in homage to the parents of all creation:
Daughter of the Mountain
And the Supreme Lord.
Their one body,
Wedding two halves,
Shows neither rent nor meld.[28]

The transition portrays itself as both seamless and pasting over a latent, more or less invisible faultline that "shows neither rent nor meld," exactly like the fusing of male and female halves into the androgynous body of Śiva-Ardhanārīśvara.

As Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa picks up the thread of the story, Patralekhā goes on reporting her last conversation with the feverish Kādambarī, who clearly had many quite remarkable things to say. Listen, for example, to the passage that comprises the expressive core of the message that Patralekhā carries to Candrâpīḍa:

kiṃ câdhunâpy adhikam upajātam/ saivâhaṃ kādambarī yânena kumāreṇa matta-mada-mukhara-madhu-kara-kula-kala-kolāhalâkulite koka-kāminī-karuṇa-kūjite virahi-jana-mano-duḥkhe vikaca-dalâravinda-nisyanda-sugandha-manda-gandha-vāhânandita-daśa-diśi pradoṣa-samaye...hima-gṛhe kusuma-strastarâvalambinī vīkṣitā/ mamâpi câpunar-ukta-tad-darśana-spṛhe te evaite locane yayor ālokana-patham asau yātaḥ/ tad eva cedam a-pratipatti-śūnyaṃ hata-hṛdayaṃ yenântaḥ-praviṣṭo 'pi na pārito dhārayitum/ tad eva caitac charīraṃ yena tat-samīpe ciram udāsīnena sthitam/ sa eva câyaṃ pāṇiḥ yo 'līka-guru-janâpekṣī nâtmānaṃ parigrāhitavān/ anapekṣita-para-pīḍaś candrâpīḍo 'pi sa eva yo 'tra vāra-dvayam āgatya pratigataḥ/ mayy evopakṣīṇa-mārgaṇatayā vâkiṃ-cit-karo 'nyatra pañca-śaro 'pi sa eva yas tvayâvedito me/

What can have happened? I am that same Kādambarī who was gazed on by the prince as I reclined upon a flower couch within the Snow House. It was that time of evening when the heartache of separated lovers is reflected in the *cakravāka*'s sad laments intertwined with soft *kolāhala* sounds of swarming bees buzzing honey-drunk; when the ten directions are refreshed by a fragrant wind languid with perfume emanating from blown lotuses.... It was into the range of these same eyes, which long to see him ever and again, that the prince came. This is that same wretched heart, so vacant with

28. K 483; Layne.

> confusion, into which he entered but in which he could not be held. This is that same body that stayed near him a long time without notice. This is that same hand that, out of a false regard for elders, did not have itself taken in marriage by him. And he is that same Candrâpīḍa who, disregarding another's woe, came here twice, then went away. It is the same Five-arrowed god who is now powerless against others because he has spent his arrows on me and who is the very one made known to me by you.[29]

A telling indexical series: she is pointing at her eyes, her heart, her body, herself, and the formula then extends to the invisible Candrâpīḍa (with an inevitable word-play on his name: "disregarding another's woe," *an-apekṣita-para-pīḍaḥ*) and the equally unseen Love god. Candrâpīḍa will shortly echo Kādambarī's statement in a more convoluted syntactic pattern: "It is this same heart that is the cause of the princess' monumental suffering and that is the cause of your [Patralekhā's] reproach" (*mūḍha-hṛdayena yad yad evâneka-prakāram... bālā balāt kāryate tat tad eva....māṃ grāhayataivam īdṛśasya devyā duḥkhasya tava copâlambhasya hetutāṃ nīto 'smi*).[30]

In this highly charged, death-filled interval, the affirmation of sameness and continuous identity has a somewhat unsettling effect. "I am still me; my heart is the same old heart, my eyes the same eyes, my lover the same person he was then." Why do these assertions emerge at this juncture? We might remember that the internal listener to the story, King Śūdraka, is also "that same Candrâpīḍa," though he is still unaware of that fact. In any case, the continuity in identity negotiates the gap between one body or birth and another—and this notion is definitely fundamental to the book's meta-psychological program. But the formula itself is very old and laden with quite special connotations. We find it, for example, as the mantra meant to be recited by the *śrauta* sacrificer, the *yajamāna*, at the conclusion of the *Darśa-pūrṇa-māsa* rite performed on new moon and full moon days. As Heesterman has rightly said, this ritual is "the model of the vegetal sacrifice (*iṣṭi*) which, again, provides the basic paradigm of all *śrauta* sacrifices."[31] As the ritual comes to an end and the *yajamāna* returns to the everyday world, he says: *idam aham ya evâsmi so 'smi*, "I'm still who I am."[32] Why should he have to say this? Heesterman insightfully links the formula to the vow (*vrata*) the *yajamāna* has taken at the *beginning* of the ritual: *idam aham anṛtāt satyam upaimi*, "Here I am going from untruth to truth."

29. 28 K 489–91; Layne 238–39.
30. K 498–99, Layne 242.
31. Heesterman 1991.
32. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.1.4–6; *Vajasaneyi Saṃhitā* 1.5 and 2.28.

In other words, simplifying considerably, the sacrificer, by embarking on the ritual, has entered into a divine domain that is defined as "truth," *satya*; he has, in effect, become a god or a part-god. Upon the conclusion of the ritual—since we are still at the point where a *śrauta* sacrifice is a two-way process, up to the heavens and then back down to earth—the sacrificer re-enters the human domain by proclaiming that he is, in fact, still, or once again, himself. He has left his divine body (*daivâtman*) in storage in the heavenly domain for the day when he will need it.

All this is spelled out for us by the *Śatapatha Brâhmaṇa*, which also somewhat disingenuously recommends the paradoxical statement concluding the rite as being somehow more "becoming":

> He who is about to enter on the vow, touches water whilst standing between the Âhavanîya and Gârhapatya fires, with his face turned towards east. Man is impure on account of his speaking untruth.... Twofold verily is this [universe], there is no third, namely truth and untruth. The Gods are truth and man is untruth. Therefore in saying, "I now enter from untruth into truth," he passes from the men to the gods. Let him then only speak what is true; for this vow indeed the gods do keep, that they speak truth.... After the completion (of the sacrifice), he divests himself (of the vow) with the text: "Now I am he who I really am." For, in entering upon the vow, he becomes, as it were, non-human; and as it would not be becoming for him to say: "I enter from truth into untruth," and as, in fact, he now again becomes man, let him therefore divest himself of the vow, with the text: "Now I am he who I really am."[33]

The paradox is glaringly apparent: "I am who I am" actually means something like "I am back in the world where untruth rules," that is, "I am now speaking untruth." Here we have the *yajamāna* as the Cretan liar: if what he says is true, then it must be false.[34] In other words, the Vedic pronouncement on potential disjunctions in continuous identity requires the person in question to

33. *vratam upaiṣyan antareṇāhavanīyaṃ ca gārhapatyaṃ ca prāṅ tiṣṭhann apa upaspṛśati tad yad apa upaspṛśaty amedhyo vai puruṣo yad anṛtam vadati... dvayam vā idaṃ na tṛtīyam asti satyaṃ caivânṛtaṃ ca satyam eva devā anṛtaṃ manuṣyā idam aham anṛtāt satyam upaimîti tan manuṣebhyo devān upaiti/ sa vai satyaṃ vadet/ etad dha vai devā vrataṃ caranti yat satyam.... atha saṃsthite visṛjate/ idam aham ya evâsmi so 'smîty amānuṣa iva vā etad bhavati yad vratam upaiti na hi tad avakalpate yad brūyād idam aham satyād anṛtam upaimîti tad u khalu punar mānuṣo bhavati tasmād idam ahaṃ ya evâsmi so 'smîty evam vrataṃ visṛjeta/ Śatapatha Brâhmaṇa* 1.1.1.1, 4–6. Translation by Eggeling, SBE.

34. See the fine paper by Grinshpon.

"speak himself" as a paradoxical riddle. I think this basic notion extends to Kādambarī's statements, too.

Stated differently, "I am who I am" actually means something like "Though I am somehow continuous with my former self, I am *not* who I was then (or who I used to be)." In Kādambarī's case the suggestion is that her situation is steadily worsening. Her initial two meetings with Candrâpīḍa were suffused by ambivalence and hesitation on his part, as we have noted, whereas she had given herself entirely to her love for him. Now, to make things worse, he has gone off (to his parents' home) without even stopping by to say goodbye and without sending any communication to the love-sick woman whom he left behind. "I'm the same person I was then," she says in her message, as if to say, "You left me stuck in the past, in an agony of unfulfilled fantasy, with almost no hope of forward movement"—and also, "Time ***seems*** to stand still for me, but in fact my strength is waning, and I am losing hope." The paradox of continuous identity echoes the paradox of memory-infused temporality itself: at once frozen in autotelic wholeness and spinning out of control in a devolutionary trajectory. It is possible that *all* identity statements in the *Kādambarī* world have this riddle-like, tensile quality, as if the very notion of personal continuity were vitiated every moment by the experience each person has of himself or herself in a world driven by devolving time.

There is also a rather striking hint of singularity in Kādambarī's message. She is the same, her eyes and heart are the same, her almost-lover is remarkably consistent in behavior and feeling; but Desire, who has wounded her with his arrows, has, she says, depleted his reserve of weapons (*upakṣīṇa-mārgaṇatā*) by shooting over and over at her and her alone (apparently, ***not*** at Candrâpīḍa). As a result, no one else is, at the moment, in danger of falling in love in the extreme way that she has. Her suffering is unique, also uniquely repetitive. Here, too, is a statement that simply cannot be true, like the *yajamāna*'s assertion that he is still the person he was before the ritual began. Were it true, in either case, it would constitute an untenable acknowledgment of failure (of the ritual ascent and descent, and of the continuing efficacy of desire in the human realm).

"Sameness," then, really means something like jagged disjunction, possibly even self-deception. Perhaps even Kādambarī has been infected by her lover's hesitancy and doubt, though she does not know it. She will eventually be put to a still more severe test. In the meantime, like the nostalgic heroines we know from other Sanskrit sources,[35] she seems almost to be longing for her own former self, when things were, ostensibly at least, a little less complicated. The reality of

35. Notably the anonymous speaker in the famous poem *yaḥ kaumāra-haraḥ* cited by Mammaṭa at the end of the first chapter in his *Kāvya-prakāśa*.

the ongoing love-relation, with its deepening uncertainties, easily generates such retrospective longing. Indeed, this theme of nostalgia for a previous self has a wide cachet in classical sources and occasionally extends even to the successful Yogi-renouncer, poised on the verge of ecstatic extinction.[36] By the same token, however, the very instability of the love-sick self unhappily enmeshed in its own imagined history and the disjunction implicit in what it chooses to say about itself lead, in the present instance, to a remarkable and unexpected move. No sooner has Kādambarī finished telling us (that is, telling the absent Candrâpīḍa by way of Patralekhā and, unknown to either of the latter two, the even more distant Śūdraka who is listening to the story of his former life) that she is exactly who she always was than she confesses to having, in effect, solved the problems of fluctuating selfhood and the living lover's enduring capriciousness by an imaginative act *par excellence*:

> *madanena vā daivena vā viraheṇa vā, yauvanena vā anurāgeṇa vā, madena vā hṛdayenā vânena vā kenâpi dattaḥ saṅkalpa-mayaḥ kumāro jana-saṃnidhāv api kena-cid avibhāvyamānaḥ siddha iva sarvadā me dadāti darśanam/ api câsāv iva nâyam akāṇḍa-parityāga-niṣṭhura-hṛdayaḥ/ ayam evâsmad-viraha-kātaraḥ/ nâyaṃ naktaṃdivaṃ lakṣmyā samākulaḥ/ na pṛthivyāḥ patiḥ/ na sarasvatīm apekṣate/ na kīrti-śabdaṃ vardhayati/ paśyāmi aharniśam āsīnotthitā bhrāmyantī śayānā jāgratī nimīlita-locanā calantī svapnāyamānā śayane śrī-maṇḍape gṛha-kamalinīṣûdyāneṣu līlā-dīrghikāsu krīḍā-parvatake bāla-giri-nadikāsu ca yathā tam ajña-jana-viḍambanaika-hetuṃ vipralambhakaṃ kumāraṃ te tathā kathitam eva mayā/ tad alam anayā tad-ānayana-kathayā...*
>
> ...Because of the Maddener, of Fate, of being separated from a lover, of youth, of passion, of madness, of the heart, or of some other reason, the prince [= Candrâpīḍa] is always with me. Made of fancy he is like a Siddha, and his supernatural powers make him imperceptible to everyone else, even to those standing very near me. This fanciful lover, unlike that real one, has not the cruelty of heart to leave me so abruptly. *He* fears being separated from me. *He* does not concern himself both night and day with the Goddess of Fortune. *He* is not a lord of the earth. *He* does not bow to the Goddess of Speech. *He* does not crave shouting "Glory!" So I have told you how I see the prince—night and day, whether sitting, rising, wandering

36. As in the case of Vyāsa in relation to his son, Śuka, see Shulman 1993, 108–32.

about, lying down, waking, dozing, moving, dreaming, on a couch on Beauty Spot, in the palace lotus beds, in the gardens, in the sporting ponds, or in the little rivulets trickling down the Pleasure Hill—that deceiver, whose sole occupation is to mock this foolish person. Enough of this talk of bringing him here![37]

She has gone beyond the vagaries of Candrâpīḍa's actual behaviour; she has got him now, permanently at her side, in a mode vastly superior—or so it seems—to the flesh-and-blood lover's utterly inadequate responses. Patralekhā, for her part, instantly recognizes the advantages of this new mental creation:

ahaṃ tu tac chrutvā samacintayam/ satyam eva garīyaḥ khalu jīvitâlambanam idaṃ viyoginīnām yad uktam saṅkalpa-mayaḥ priyo nitarāṃ kulâṅganānāṃ viśeṣataḥ kumārīṇām/ tathā hi/ anena sârdham akṛta-dūtikā-pāda-patana-dainyāni ca pratikṣaṇaṃ samāgama-śatāny a-kāla-ramaṇīyāni svecchâbhisaraṇa-saukhyāny atyantâdūṣita-kanyakā-bhāvāni suratāni, surateṣu câkṛta-stana-vyavadhāna-duḥkhāny āliṅganāni, ajanita-vraṇa-darśana-vrīḍāni nakha-danta-padāni, an-ākulita-keśa-pāśāḥ kaca-graha-mahotsavāḥ, śabda-vihīnāni nidhuvanāni, an-utpādita-guru-jana-vibhāvita-kṣata-vailakṣyāny adhara-khaṇḍana-vilasitāni/ nainam andhakāra-rāśir antarayati na jala-dharadhārâpātaḥ sthagayati na nīhāra-nikaras tiro-dadhātîti

Having listened to her, I thought: "This is a great support indeed to aid those women separated from their lovers to cling to life, namely, an imaginary lover. It is crucial in the case of high-born ladies, and most of all in that of princesses. For then: love play is free from the awkward times when messengers prostrate themselves; there are a myriad unions at every moment; the amorous meetings are pleasant because they can be had at any time; there is the thrill of capricious encounters; and the virginity of the maiden remains intact. Also, in such love play there are embraces in which breasts do not intervene; there are no embarrassing wounds of tooth and nail marks to be seen; there is no disarray of ornamented tresses; there is no playful seizing of the hair; sex acts are wordless; and the frisky play of biting the lower lip does not produce a shameful rent to be seen by the elders. The imaginary lover is not concealed by a cloak of night, screened by a veil of rain, nor swathed in a blanket of mist."[38]

37. K 491–92; Layne 239–40.
38. K 493–94; Layne 240.

We should not miss the irony (it is not so easy to miss it): Patralekhā's reflection is obviously not meant to be taken at face value. Otherwise she would not have come all the way to Ujjayinī to try to persuade Candrâpīḍa to come back with her to the mountains. For all that, the lover fashioned by the imagination is no empty achievement, nor is he unreal. Indeed, this passage is a relatively early and very powerful articulation of the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the imagination. Kādambarī, in her distress, has made an important discovery. Her words strike a deeper chord than Patralekhā's; she can actually characterize the fantasy lover in very specific ways—he is not obsessed with ego issues; he is not cruel; he is not so good at slick, charming chatter (one of Candrâpīḍa's great gifts)—and, of course, above all, he is dependably there, whole, unchanging, the very opposite of Kādambarī's own disjointed trajectory ("I'm still me"). This fantasy lover is also the opposite of both male heroes of the book, the "real" Candrâpīḍa and his friend Puṇḍarīka, with their radical experiences of amnesiac self-loss and rebirth. More to the point, this delicious stability and continuity is a natural and necessary complement to the instability and discontinuity that lurk within Kādambarī's formula of identity. The two vectors comprise a single complete set; neither can fully exist without the other.

Note that this conclusion is nicely suited to the metapoetic or stylistic amalgam that we have defined as characteristic for Bāṇa's prose—primary parataxis, with its built-in uncertainty, open-endedness, and under-signification, masquerading as a stable, hierarchically ordered, uniformly illumined hypotaxis. Indeed, the identity concerns that come to the fore at this crucial point of juncture have a specific and explicit relation to language and its expressive range: we have seen that Candrâpīḍa responds to Patralekhā's report in a meditative passage on the ambiguities and multiple meanings at work in her (or perhaps any human) speech.[39] If we now juxtapose the elements we have isolated analytically in this particularly pregnant moment, we see that the gap opened up by Bāṇa's death is articulated by four inter-locking themes: the elusive, continuously unraveling sense of personal identity (especially in relation to desire); the compensatory act of imagination, holding things together out of its own autonomous force and self-regulating tendency; the role of language in providing both an ongoing temporal sequence and a sense of deeper, non-linear depth; and the riddle-like nature of death itself, informing the experience of the mature human being as an integral part of his or her awareness. Here is a story that is, we might say, literally riddled with death. Let us see if, in conclusion, we can formulate something of what this means for Bāṇa and his heroes.

39. See the explanation given earlier in § E.

G. Disjunction as Resolution

In what sense is death a riddle? Not, perhaps, in the sense that it usually entails an uncertain, unknowable timing and the inevitable consequent anxiety, which we stated earlier: Will the author live to finish his work? Will the reader live to the end of the sentence? These questions are not riddles. A true riddle requires a blockage, an internal boundary against which the riddlee crashes, confused: one set of images confronts another incompatible set. "What has golden hair and stands in the corner?" Our mind conjures up a princess unaccountably doomed to the dark periphery. Something is wrong. The posing of the riddle brings us face to face with an apparent paradox; the answer unblocks and defuses the paradox: "A broom."[40] An occlusion built into perception is, first, put into language and then unblocked by another linguistic-cognitive act. As Handelman has shown in a subtle essay, the mechanism of unblocking has causal features—in which one thing is made over into another—as well as categorical properties: one category is brought into relation with another, normally quite a separate or distinct one, in such a way as to create a new, wider, inter-connected whole. "The relationship of the riddle image to the entire, but as yet unrevealed, riddle is that of synecdoche. The riddle image is a part that signifies the as yet unrevealed whole. This whole is then the metaphor that...completes the total microworld of the riddle. Then this relationship is that whole which subsumes and connects its disparate parts."[41]

There is, of course, something tantalizing about the author's death *in medias res*, especially in a work like the *Kādambarī* where the frazzled strands of identity are so profuse, baffling, and unresolved. None of the book makes any sense in the absence of a conclusion that will tell us who is (or was) who. The reader is in very much the same situation as the internal listener to the story, Śūdraka, who still has no inkling of his real identity at the moment Bāṇa chooses to disappear. But as I have already said (and Grintser has carefully demonstrated), the *Kādambarī* is a story with more than one possible ending.[42] The ending we have is adequate, tidy, and somewhat arbitrary. Its arbitrary nature carries the frustration endemic to the solution of riddles, normally a somewhat deflating experience. The golden-haired princess is *only* a broom? Why, in the end, must Candrâpīḍa be a displacement of the Moon and of Śūdraka, as the two Vaiśampāyanas are of Puṇḍarīka? What is the point? Has anybody learned anything worth learning from this process?

40. See discussion in Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 1996.

41. Handelman 1996, 46.

42. See note 3.

Perhaps the answer is yes. By the time the solution is in place, toward the end of the *Uttarabhāga*, Śūdraka is utterly transformed. He has learned that "he"—a former yet somehow concurrent "he"—is lying comatose near a lake in the mountains, cursed to suffer this fate (in one of his former personae) by his best friend (Puṇḍarīka) and by his own enduring ambivalence and hesitation (as Candrâpīḍa)—also, perhaps, by his glib way of speaking, his dangerous facility with speech. He has also learned that the woman he has come to love, in a whole-hearted way, is as devoted to him, as he lies in the coma, as any human being can be to another; that his life, in fact, is vested in her devotion. He also seems moved to re-connect with his former self or selves—and, in any case, his passion for Kādambarī has flared up again, this time as a steady flame.

These are no small increments to Śūdraka's awareness, or to ours. A definite logic attaches to Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa's proposed ending. In particular, the role of death in the heroes' lives seems to have shifted in interesting ways. Neither Candrâpīḍa nor Puṇḍarīka has actually succeeded in dying and staying dead. In both cases, the comatose body is preserved as the vehicle for a future restoration. This repeated image situates us at the very heart of Bāṇa's riddle (more precisely, for Śūdraka as the prototypical listener it is what folklorists call a "head riddle," balanced between life and death, with life as the stake). Let us see if we can articulate the question that the *Uttarabhāga* has to solve, though there is always something a bit misleading in an overly formal, logical rendition of the riddle's block and its removal. There is, first, the odd, fundamentally self-referential paradox that can be easily generalized to any and all listeners to this particular story: "I am alive but will not always be (have not always been) alive" or, alternately, "I am at once myself and not myself (and thus I cannot truly know myself)." But then this unnerving puzzle can be restated in ways that lead us through and away from paradox. For example, "I am at this moment both alive and not fully alive." Even better, as litotes: "I am not not alive" and "I am never not myself (but never 'wholly' myself)."

In other words, the hero's death, like that of the author, like the listener's, is configured as necessarily internal to and integral to this work, which survives the gap deliberately opened at its most sensitive point. The reports of the author's death may thus be grossly exaggerated. Even to speak about it involves the speaker in the *yajamāna*'s half-truth, which is, no doubt, as close as one can come to truth in a world pervaded by lies. "I am who I am—dead or alive." In Bāṇa's translation: "I am that same Kādambarī, and he is that same Candrâpīḍa." On the other hand, the open gap is no accident. In a way, it draws the entire narrative, whether sequentially prior or anterior to it, into its depths.

There is another, not unrelated way to formulate the paradox at its deepest point. Already in very ancient times, the intimate link between fathers and sons is stated in terms of a paradoxical continuity of identities:

> The husband enters his wife and becomes an embryo inside her, his mother. Becoming new in her again, he is born in the tenth month. Since he is born (*jāyate*) in her, she is called "wife" (*jāyā*). This is the power (*ābhūti*) that infuses the seed.[43]

Father and son are both the same and not entirely the same. Note, however, that the wife/mother remains relatively constant, like Kādambarī; she seems immune to the necessity of renewal through incubation and rebirth. Men, by way of contrast, are far from immune. The father dies into the seed that will re-embody him—as Bāṇa is said to have died so as to be completed by Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa. Here is another head-riddle, at once articulated and resolved by the literary tradition in its story of the *Kādambarī*'s double authorship.

It is striking that tradition tells us something quite close to this idea in oral materials that relate specifically to the transition from *Pūrvabhāga* to *Uttarabhāga*. Bāṇa, they say, knew he would die before he could finish the book, so he wanted to choose which of his sons should be primed to complete it. He set them a task—to describe a pile of firewood. The eldest son described it in a way so dessicated that Bāṇa nearly died on the spot. Bhūṣaṇa Bhaṭṭa then described it in a gentle and magically potent fashion that recalled Bāṇa's own gift as a prose-narrator. The book thus found its final author.[44] Here is a story which thematizes the issues of sameness and continuity—of part A and part B, of father and son—in terms much like those posed earlier. The conclusion of the story will be both the same and not the same as its beginning, like the *yajamāna*'s telling statement about his adventures in heaven and return to earth.

H. Conclusion

The *Kādambarī* is a work of sheer, moon-struck intoxication. *Kādambarī-rasa-jñānām āhāro 'pi na rocate/ kādambarī rasa-jñānām āhāro 'pi na rocate.*[45] Two seemingly identical statements are finally not quite the same: "Those who relish wine have no taste for food."/ "Those who are absorbed in reading the *Kādambarī*

43. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.18.
44. Hueckstedt 1985, 140–41; discussion in Tieken.
45. Krishnamachariar 1970, 448.

lose their taste for food." Both statements are true, or true enough. Awash in the creamy, hypnotic, deceptive light of the moon, the heroes—including the Moon himself—grow obliquely, with many false starts and wrong turns, into fuller states of self-recognition and mature loving. They—particularly the males—continually repeat themselves, much as Bāṇa's prose consistently repeats its paratactic patterns; but not till the end of the book do they come to know they are repeating and thus achieve the fleeting coincidence of selves that offers some relief from their suffering. The hyphenated author, too, achieves something of this effect. Though both language and plot reveal very dense inter-connectivity, the characters themselves have little or no interiority, in the modern sense—hence, as I have said, this work is not even remotely a novel. We might think of it as a musical text focused on its own recurring patterns, aural, syntactic, and thematic, and on their ultimate resolution, which retains something of the asymmetry and incongruity that have been manifest all along. I have tried to show that this resolution mimics the dynamics of riddling and, in particular, the well-known genre of the head-riddle, although in this case the potentially lethal form generates more than one possible answer, not by chance. As such, it provides one model for authorship in general in classical *kāvya*, one in which the reader may be called upon to complete the work of composition and choose among several possible options. For him or her, too, the stakes are high. Very striking is the fact that this open-endedness, a matter of principle, comes into play not at the ostensible moment of resolution but somewhere in the middle of the story, as the author himself is said to have foreseen. In a wider perspective, this point of transition should no doubt be extracted from its place in the linear sequence—after all, the story is told in embedded frames beginning far from the linear or chronological beginning—and given its due as embodying one of the book's primary messages and most creative perceptions. In this sense, the *Kādambarī*, far from being an uneven graft of two quite different segments composed by two unequally gifted poets, is one of Sanskrit tradition's most coherent and eloquent works.

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12

On the Boldness of Bāṇa*

Gary Tubb

We have had several occasions to mention the pivotal role of the seventh-century author Bāṇa Bhaṭṭa as a poet who was seen by others as particularly innovative and was described as the founder of a new path of poetry that many—including especially the Pāla poets and others who, like Bāṇa, worked at or in contact with the courts of Kannauj—claimed to follow with pride.

Unfortunately, those poets have seldom offered explicit explanations of what they found new and worthy of imitation in Bāṇa, although one word is used more frequently than others in describing his style: *prāgalbhya*, or "boldness." This label may have become current even during the poet's lifetime, if we may read a verse from the opening of his *Harṣacarita* as expressing a modest demurral of that distinction in the course of praising his patron:

Verse 1: Bāṇa on his patron and his own poetic power[1]

āḍhyarāja-kṛtârambhair hṛdaya-sthaiḥ smṛtair api /
jihvântaḥ kṛṣyamāṇêva na kavitve pragalbhate //

The deeds done by Āḍhyarāja
are stored deep within my heart,
and if I but call them to mind,

* I am indebted to Yigal Bronner for his comments, and to Steven Collins and my other colleagues in the South Asian Languages & Civilizations (SALC) Department Faculty Forum for their observations on this chapter.

1. *Harṣacarita* 1.18 = *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1735.

my tongue seems drawn back in by them,
and is not bold enough to send out poetry.

The demurral was disproven by what follows it, but it does seem true that Bāṇa was modest enough not to enumerate for us his own poetic innovations. For that we must examine his poetry itself. And on the question of what his admirers might have found worthy of imitation, we must be attentive not only to their occasional comments on the topic, but also to their own poetic practice. That examination will be a goal in the next section of essays in this volume, and the comments of followers of Bāṇa in the regions near Kannauj will be discussed especially in the chapter following this one. For now it must suffice to give a prospective summary of the types of boldness discussed there, as a preliminary guide to reading Bāṇa's poetic output with the concept of boldness in mind.

I will mention here only four types of boldness, falling within the two large areas of verbal technique and ideal conception.

In the area of verbal technique, the idea of the Gauḍa style, often associated with Bāṇa and regionally appropriate in application to a northeasterner, is useful as a starting point. In this chapter I will focus especially on the use of noticeable sound effects such as alliteration, internal rhyme, and distinctive phonemes, and on the use of relatively long compounds. We shall see that these techniques are useful in describing Bāṇa's style not because he invented them or used them more than others—neither claim would be true—but rather because he found new ways of controlling them, of using them only to appropriate extents, and of making them expressive in conveying particular ideas.

In the area of ideas, two further forms of boldness will be noticeable in Bāṇa's poetic work. On a smaller scale, we will see his willingness to take up topics that had been unusual in earlier Sanskrit *kāvya* or that even ran counter to the social expectations of that poetic tradition. This tendency extends from his acknowledged mastery of the genre of *jāti* or realistic description of individual things, to his pioneering expansion of the reach of *kāvya* into areas of rural or lower-class life previously avoided by Sanskrit court poets. On a larger scale, we will encounter important examples of a form of boldness that is difficult to define but that might be referred to as a grandness of vision, involving as it does an ability to conceive and execute unusually powerful poetic complexes, often within small spaces—a quality explored by Smith on the basis of the comment by the ninth-century poet Ratnākara that "it was Bāṇa first led the way/with writings great in scope, slow yet bold."[2]

2. Quoted and translated in Smith 1985, 105; the third quarter in the sixth of seven verses appended to the *Haravijaya* of Ratnākara: *tan mandâbhipragalbhaprasaragurugirām agraṇīr bāṇa ekaḥ*. The quality of "greatness in scope" is discussed in Smith 1985, 108–9.

The four types of boldness focused on in this chapter may thus be outlined as follows:

A. Striking verbal technique
 1. Expressive repetition of sounds
 2. Expressive choices in the length of compounds
B. Conceptual courage
 1. Daring choices in subject matter
 2. Daringly novel or complex conceptions

Any examination of Bāṇa's boldness as a model for later poets must confront the awkward fact that Bāṇa himself is thought of as an author of prose poetry, and most of the poets who claimed to follow him are not. Bāṇa's prose style was a topic of the preceding essay,[3] and it is clear that much of what later verse poets found impressive about Bāṇa did involve his prose works, and that some of the techniques he employed there—like some related techniques in the prose style of Subandhu described in an earlier essay in this section, involving especially the uses of long compounds—were later transferred in various ways to the composition of poetic verse. In particular, Bāṇa's mastery of the extended use of bitextual references has been described as especially influential over a range extended far beyond India.[4] But it is also clear, although surprisingly little noticed, that Bāṇa's poetic output included many very impressive and influential verses, a fact well known to Sanskrit critics closer to him in time such as Bhojadeva, who declared that Bāṇa's work in verse was the equal of his work in prose.[5]

The purpose of the present essay is to examine Bāṇa's surviving verse poetry with an eye to categories of boldness. The extant verses attributed to Bāṇa can be found in three types of sources. The most obvious category is that of the verses contained within Bāṇa's two famous prose works, consisting of the series of verses placed at the beginning of each of these two works, together with isolated verses appearing within the body of the works. Second, of the other works attributed to Bāṇa the one most likely actually to have been composed by him is a collection of verses entitled *Caṇḍīśataka*, "Century (of verses) on the Angry (Goddess)," which contains over 100 verses on a single theme. Third, we find many verses attributed to Bāṇa in other works, including treatises on poetics and, most importantly, early anthologies of Sanskrit verse. The most useful

3. "The Nail-Mark That Lit the Bedroom: Biography of a Compound," by Yigal Bronner.

4. Pollock 2006, 139–40. For and extensive history of the use of bitextual poetry in Sanskrit and related languages, see Bronner 2010.

5. *yādṛg gadya-vidhau bāṇaḥ padya-bandhe 'pi tādṛśaḥ*, quoted from *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* 2.20ab in Sternbach 1979, 112, § 6.

anthology for this purpose is the oldest of them, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, from which we learn, in a fairly trustworthy way, that Bāṇa was the actual author of a number of famous and influential verses which in later works were presented anonymously or even borrowed into collections eventually attributed to other authors.

Of the verses attributed to Bāṇa in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, some 21 were marked by Ingalls as being dependable in that attribution.[6] All but a handful of those verses fall into categories especially associated with Bāṇa. The first four of them are benedictory verses describing the god Śiva and his family, which I shall turn to in a moment, and the last four are verses in praise of poets, drawn from the opening verses of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, which contain useful comments but which, aside from their subject matter, are not in themselves noteworthy examples of bold poetic style. Another half dozen verses are realistic descriptions, including the depictions of a horse and of smoke, which are two of the most famous examples in Sanskrit literature of the type of poetry called *jāti* ("intrinsic character") or *svabhāvokti* ("expression of inherent nature"), and also a number of verses describing summer, exemplifying the type of poems which Ingalls refers to as "strikingly original descriptive verses" by Bāṇa and by the Pāla poets who followed him.[7] Another four verses fall into a particular interesting category: they are verses which when combined with others scattered in the anthologies give evidence of sequences composed by Bāṇa involving verses that are not only clearly connected with each other but which seem to be connected in a specific order, and therefore perhaps to be remnants of larger compositions now lost.

In this chapter, by way of case studies necessarily covering only a portion of Bāṇa's surviving corpus of verse poetry, I will deal with three of these categories: Bāṇa's Śaiva benedictory poems, and two of the apparent verse sequences just mentioned, one devoted to descriptions of moonlight and the other to descriptions of a poor traveler in winter.

A. Bāṇa's Benedictory Verses[8]

The opening verse in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* is a salutation to the great god Śiva, which despite its brevity serves both as a testimony to the success of Bāṇa as an

6. Ingalls 1965, 600. The reasons for trusting or rejecting ascriptions are given in general in Ingalls 1965, 599, and in particular in his notes on individual verses.

7. Ingalls 1965, 120.

8. Portions of this section are based in part on three oral presentations: "A Special Kind of Speech: The Distinctiveness of Sanskrit Poetry," South Asian Seminar, Yale University,

author of verse poetry—judging by the unparalleled frequency with which the verse is copied in Indian inscriptions, it has been one of the most highly appreciated of all Sanskrit *maṅgala* verses—and also as a useful introduction to some of the characteristic features of Bāṇa's verse style that might reasonably be considered examples of the "boldness" for which he became famous.

Verse 2. On Śiva[9]

namas tuṅga-śiraś-cumbi-candra-cāmara-cārave /
trailokya-nagarârambha-mūla-stambhāya śambhave //

Homage to Śambhu,
beautiful with the chowrie
of the crescent moon
kissing his high head,
foundation pillar
from the beginning of the city
that is this universe.[10]

Notice that the verse in the original Sanskrit consists of only four words. Two of them, the short words at the very beginning and end, state the basic sentence: *namaḥ śambhave*, "Homage to Śambhu, and of these two the entry word *namaḥ* already completes the treatment of the poet's own role, mentioning his act of bowing down as humbly as possible, without even the use of a personal verb, and leaving the poet scrunching down unobtrusively in one small corner of the verse, as emphasized by the huge leap in the next word to the top of Śiva's lofty head, *tuṅga-śiras*. The exit word, *śambhave*, delivers not only the required focus on Śiva but also the appropriate application of this focus to the blessing of the reader, through, among other things, the choice of a name for him that is expressive of beneficence.

In between these two words the remainder of the verse is taken up by two long compounds describing Śiva, the first of them presenting a visual image of him, and the second explaining the significance of that appearance and of

November 2005; "Love and Religion in Classical Sanskrit Poetry," Humanities Day Presentation, University of Chicago, October 2008; and "Opening Lines: Religious Poetry and the Verses of Bāṇa," Hindu Studies Colloquium series, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, December 2008.

9. *Harṣacarita* 1.1 = *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 48.

10. The translation given here is by Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, and is taken from the discussion of this verse in the Introduction to this volume.

Śiva himself. The connection between the two is made clear in the remarks of a commentator, appropriately named Śaṅkara (another epithet referring to Śiva as beneficent), quoted by Ingalls in his note on this verse:[11]

> At the founding of a city a foundation pillar is [used]. After attaching to it banners, ribbons and so forth, a chowrie (royal fly-whisk), white as the moon, is fixed to the upper part of it at the side. Such is the custom.

Thus the viewing of the crescent moon as a chowrie hanging from one end is not merely a pleasing figure in itself, but also a justification for the image in the second compound. The real point of the second compound, however, is that the image of Śiva as a foundation pillar actually requires no justification, for it is already true, not simply because Śiva was and is the foundation of the universe, but also because in his form as *Jyotirliṅga* he is actually present in the universe as a cosmic pillar.

The further appropriateness of the image becomes clear only through our happening to know the original setting of this perfect little poem, as the opening verse of Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, a long prose poem on the deeds of his patron. The relevance of the image to the occasion of taking up a work describing a great empire builder is obvious. It marks not only the celebration of the founding of an empire by Bāṇa's patron king, and the beginning of Bāṇa's great poem on the topic, but also Bāṇa's own founding of a new genre in Sanskrit, that of the poetic biography of a contemporary figure. When we consider as well the compact wording of the verse, the deliberate rhyme and other verbal ornaments, and the further visual congruities such as the stone-white color of Śiva's body, the overall impact of the verse is even more impressive, and it would be hard to find a more skillfully constructed verse of any length. Despite its brevity, the verse illustrates several of the features that are found throughout Bāṇa's corpus of poetry: the appropriate and effective use both of long compounds and of striking alliteration (here extending also to rhyme) together with a boldness of concept seen both in the use of an unusual topic of description (here a practical detail so rarely mentioned that hardly any modern reader of *kāvya* could have understood it without the note) and in the overall grandeur of vision (here encompassing the tallest and oldest structure in the universe).

In Bāṇa's long prose poem, this opening verse is followed by a second salutation, this one directed toward Śiva's wife, the goddess Umā, and referring to

11. Ingalls 1965, 471, n. on vs. 48.

the mythological notion of Śiva's throat being stained by the terrible poison that he drank to save the world:

Verse 3. On Śiva's wife, Pārvatī[12]

hara-kaṇṭha-grahânanda-mīlitâkṣīṃ namāmy umām /
kālakūṭa-viṣa-sparśa-jāta-mūrcchâgamām iva //

I bow to Umā,
who has closed her eyes in bliss
as she embraces the neck of Hara,
as if she has swooned
from contact with its Kālakūṭa poison.

The verse shares with the one that precedes it the same basic technique of apportioning short words and long compounds to different purposes. Once again the skeleton sentence is expressed in two short words: *namāmy umām*, "I bow to Umā"—here placed near the midpoint of the verse rather than at its ends, and nicely set off by a quick bit of alliteration—and the rest of the verse consists of two long compounds (the second extending to the end of the verse if, as Sanskrit commentators on *kāvya* literature regularly do,[13] we take the enclitic particle *iva* as being joined to the word it follows), of which the first compound describes Umā's reaction to Śiva and the second offers a fancied explanation for it. And once again, the poetic figure is not merely ornamental, but calls attention directly to the underlying reality of interest to the poet, which is the mixture of the attractive and the terrible, of love and fear, which is inherent in the relationship of this divine couple.

These two verses are followed by a series of others dealing with poets of the past—a device that is an innovation in itself,[14] although perhaps of lesser interest in terms of poetic techniques. Similarly, in Bāṇa's other prose poem, the *Kādambarī*, discussed in the previous chapters, a few opening benedictory verses are followed by a number of verses on an innovative topic, namely the family history of the poet himself. In the *Kādambarī*, however, the auspicious verses with which the poem begins seem in poetic terms to be less interesting, and less illuminating for a study of Bāṇa's reputed boldness, than his other offerings—a situation for which I have no explanation, although it is possible that, if Bāṇa did in fact die before completing the poem, as stories about

12. *Harṣacarita* 1.2.

13. See for example Mallinātha on *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.1: *ity ekaṃ padam. ivena saha nitya-samāso vibhakty-alopaś ca pūrva-pada-prakṛti-svaratvaṃ ceti vaktavyam. evam anyatrâpi draṣṭavyam.*

14. Pollock 2003, 76–77, and Pollock 1995.

him claim,[15] some or all of the introductory verses may have been composed by other individuals, as seems often to have been the case for introductory verses in Sanskrit plays.[16]

Fortunately we are not left without further evidence, since we find preserved in various old anthologies a number of other verses attributed to Bāṇa and belonging to this same genre of benediction and obeisance. The oldest such anthology, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* of Vidyākara, contains, in addition to the first verse quoted earlier, a couple of other poems of this sort involving Śiva's family and illustrating some of the same features.

One is another verse on Pārvatī's reaction to a frightening aspect of Śiva, in this case his cosmic dance and the sudden increase in size that accompanies it. It also refers to the iconographic notion of the *ārdhanārīśvara* form of Śiva, in which he provides the right side of a single body, and she the left:

Verse 4. On Śiva's dance and his wife Pārvatī[17]

maulau vegād udañcaty api caraṇa-bhara-nyañcad-urvī-talatvād
akṣuṇṇa-svarga-loka-sthiti-mudita-sura-jyeṣṭha-goṣṭhī-stutāya /
saṃtrāsān niḥsaranty ûpy avirata-visarad-dakṣiṇârdhânubandhāt
atyaktāyâdri-putryā tripura-hara-jagat-kleśa-hantre namas te //

Homage to you, taker of the Triple City,
destroyer of the world's afflictions;
you to whom the senate of the gods
gives joyous praise at seeing heaven's safety
unbroken even when your head zooms up,
because the earth must then sink down
under your weighty feet;
you whom the Mountain's daughter cannot leave
even if she shrinks away in terror,
because her bond to you as her right half
must always pull her back.

Here the skeleton sentence expressed in two words at the very end, *namas te*, "homage to you," is preceded by a concise reference to the beneficent nature of Śiva's destructiveness—he destroys the Triple City but also destroys the world's afflictions. As in the other verses, long compounds are reserved for explanatory and descriptive material. The main punch of the verse, in terms of technique,

15. See the essay by Herman Tieken in this section, "Bāṇa's Death in the *Kādambarī*."
16. Ingalls 1965, 439.
17. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 56.

lies in the conceits it presents, fanciful explanations of cause and effect based on traditional iconography but used to explain the events in an imagined scene. As before, however, the underlying goal of this little poem is to remind us that even the most frightening expressions of Śiva's cosmic power are inseparable from the fact of his abiding love and compassion for us all.

Causal conceits are even more prominent in the other benedictory verse involving Śiva's family preserved in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, which describes Śiva and Pārvatī's son Guha. Using the elements of Śiva's headdress familiar from iconography, it offers a long imagined chain of cause and effect, reminiscent of the detailed fancies employed later by the playwright Murāri:

Verse 5. On Śiva's young son Guha[18]

svecchârambhaṃ luṭhitvā pitur urasi citā-bhasma-dhūlī-citâṅgo
gaṅgā-vāriṇy agādhe jhaṭiti hara-jaṭā-jūṭato datta-jhampaḥ /
sadyaḥ śītkāra-kārī jala-jaḍima-raṇad-danta-paṅktir guho vaḥ
kampī pāyād apāyāj jvalita-śikhi-śikhe cakṣuṣi nyasta-hastaḥ //

Freely embracing his father,
he rolls across his chest
until his own body is covered with ashes.
So all at once he dives from the pile
of Śiva's dreadlocks into the depths
of the Ganges that flows on his head.
At the shock of the water's coldness
he sucks in breath through teeth
that begin to chatter,
and, trembling now, holds up his hands
to the eye with the blazing fire.
May Guha, as he trembles,
protect you from harm.

Here the use of long compounds seen in the previous verses would not have been appropriate, given the need to describe a series of separate stages, although it is probably not an accident that the poet has chosen to devote the longest compound in the verse to the description of the chattering of the boy's teeth. The verbal attention is rather on the unusually frequent use of alliteration, which, in addition to its imitative function in describing that chattering, serves to provide some internal cohesion to each of these sequential stages: *citā- ... -citā, gaṅgā- ...*

18. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 91. The reading *svecchârambhaṃ* at the beginning of the verse is an emendation suggested in Ingalls 1965, 475, n. on vs. 91.

agādhe ... jhaṭiti ... -jaṭājūṭato ... jhampaḥ, -kāra-kārī jala-jaḍima- ranad-danta-, pāyād apāyād, -śikhi-śikhe, nyasta-hastaḥ.

Whereas each of the previous verses has as its main action an act of obeisance, expressed through a form of the verbal room *nam*, "to bow," here that act is embedded within the verse in the boy's gesture of holding his hands up to Śiva, ostensibly to warm them in the fire of Śiva's third eye, but on a deeper level a gesture of worship, paralleling that supposed of the reader, and turning the force of Guha's obeisance and of the verse itself into a benediction to be received by the reader. The sequential stages in the verses are designed to lead, through a chain-reaction series of fanciful consequences, to this final gesture of salutation, itself expressed in the very last word of the verse, *nyasta-hastaḥ*, "with hands held up to."

The suggestion supplied by this final visual image is strongly supported by the verbal suggestion delivered by the first word of the final line, *kampī*, "trembling," which brings to mind the related word *anukampī*, "compassionate," as Ingalls recognized in referring to this suggestion in his note on this poem as "the principal effect of the verse."[19] The resulting implication is that little Guha has acted out this entire sequence of adventures as an act of compassion for us, in order to attract our attention to the admiration of his father, and to attract in return Śiva's favor upon us, through which he will protect us from harm.

At the deepest level, then, the focus is on the compassion of Śiva himself, as seen in the occurrence here once again of a concern to convey the paradox, so characteristic of Śiva in Bāṇa's conception of him, of the coexistence of the god's compassion with the apparently destructive or harmful aspects of his appearance and external behavior. This is why each of the boy's little discomforts in the verse is caused by some feature of Śiva's iconography and yet Guha immediately turns for relief to yet another of his father's features, culminating in the gesture of holding his hands up to the most directly terrible and destructive of those features, the fire coming from the third eye of Śiva's forehead, trusting that dreadful force to bring lasting comfort. And in the same way, it is a list of Śiva's dangerous and troublesome features that is used to direct upon the reader a prayer that this same deity will protect the reader from all harm.

Although these last two poems are in the form of *maṅgala* verses of the type used as auspicious preliminaries within a longer work, we have no information on the original setting of these verses. For one further benedictory verse attributed to Bāṇa in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, we do know that it served as one of the introductory verses in a surviving longer work, although this must not have been its original setting. The verse has long been famous as the second of the opening

19. Ingalls 1965, 475, n. on vs. 91.

verses in the *Amaruśataka*, a collection of suggestive verses presenting psychological vignettes exploring the emotional world of aristocratic polygamy, and attributed to a king named Amaru. It is only from the testimony of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*—the oldest of the extant Sanskrit verse anthologies and one of demonstrable reliability in its attributions[20]—that we have come to know (or to know once again) that the verse was originally composed by Bāṇa.

The verse is probably the best-known example in Sanskrit of the achievement of the goal we have seen at work in the preceding verses, in which several kinds of verbal and ideal creativity are used to convey the idea of the paradoxical but religiously paramount notion of Śiva's simultaneous powers of destruction and compassion; in the introduction to his translation of the anthology, Ingalls singled out this verse as his example of how "in the hands of a true poet Sanskrit suggestion can achieve effects of tremendous power,"[21] and long before him the same verse attracted lengthy and sophisticated analyses in Sanskrit by authors both of commentaries on the *Amaruśataka* and of independent treatises on poetic suggestion.

The verse invokes, as a reader of the original Sanskrit learns for certain only at the very end of the verse, the myth of Śiva's destruction of the Triple City of the demons, which Ingalls has described as "the favorite myth for the poets" among those involving Śiva, and "the only myth that elicits from the Śaivas a strong emotional response."[22]

Verse 6. The weeping of the demon ladies[23]

kṣipto hastâvalagnaḥ prasabham abhihato 'py ādadāno 'ṃśukântaṃ
gṛhṇan keśeṣv apāstaś caraṇa-nipatito nêkṣitaḥ sambhrameṇa /
āliṅgan yo 'vadhūtas tripura-yuvatibhiḥ sâśrunetrôtpalābhiḥ
kāmîvârdrâparādhaḥ sa haratu duritaṃ śāmbhavo vaḥ śarâgniḥ //

Grasping her hand when shoved away,
taking hold of her hem though violently struck,
grabbing her by the hair when pushed aside,
then falling at her feet
(at which in agitation she turns away
her lotus eyes now filled with tears)
and, though being shaken off,
embracing each of the young ladies

20. Ingalls 1965, 30–49.
21. Ingalls 1965, 21–22.
22. Ingalls 1965, 72.
23. *Subhaṣitaratnakoṣa* 49 = *Amaruśataka* 2.

of the Triple City
as if it were a lover whose offense is fresh,
may the fire of Śambhu's arrow
take away your sin.

Here the use of long compounds is ruled out by the need to depict a violently dynamic scene with multiple actions. The verbal distinctiveness of the verse resides elsewhere, and especially in the way that the ambiguities afforded by Sanskrit morphology and syntax are used to delay the reader's recognition of the full situation. The verse begins with a description apparently belonging, as is explicitly acknowledged at the beginning of third quarter of the verse, to the standard genre (occurring with special frequency in the *Amaruśataka*) of the depiction of a man confronting a woman who is angry at him for his having recently given attention to another of the women to whom he is attached. Our verse describes, at its outset, an unnamed man persisting through a series of physical rejections, and it is only somewhere in the middle of the third quarter of the verse that we discover that the man is interacting not with a single woman but with all the women of the demons' Triple City, and not until the very last word of the entire verse that we discover the man who is pressing himself upon them is not a man at all, but rather the fire of Śiva's arrow.

These misdirections are impossible to convey in translation in any way close to their accomplishment in Sanskrit, where they are handled with striking perfection. Yet, as in the other verses we have seen, the ultimate focus is not on the verbal achievement in itself, but on the deep meaning that it helps to convey, once more involving the paradox, endlessly fascinating to Bāṇa and to many other poets, of the interplay of compassion and destruction in the actions of this god who burns away sins. Here the treatment of this concept is brought to an even greater richness by the beautifully evocative incorporation of poetic themes familiar from the poetry of polygamous love and the jealousies it provokes.

That genre of poetry, many fine examples of which are collected in the work that this verse now helps to introduce, brings with it a highly developed set of techniques attuned to the depiction of the human experience of amorous love that is here transferred with remarkable power to the theme of divine love. The complex psychological and physical reactions of women trying to deal with a lover who himself deals with more than one woman are useful, we now see, in helping us to contemplate the actions of a god who loves us all, and does so in ways that may make the reception of his love a process involving some anguish and resistance along the way.

Certainly the verse is bold in its conception and in its execution, and its selection for use at the head of the *Amaruśataka* was a bold and brilliant act

in itself. In that collection it is preceded by a single verse, a benediction attributed in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* not to Bāṇa but to Acalasiṃha, a poet (most likely a playwright)[24] known almost entirely by such ascriptions, and presumably one of the Pāla poets of the century following Bāṇa's,[25] whose dependence upon Bāṇa will be described in the next chapter. The verse is another involving archery, but this time the shooter is Śiva's wife:

Verse 7. On the glance of Pārvatī[26]

jyâkṛṣṭi-baddha-khaṭakāmukha-pāṇi-pṛṣṭha-
preṅkhan-nakhâṃsu-caya-saṃvalito 'mbikāyāḥ /
tvāṃ pātu mañjarita-pallava-karṇapūra-
lobha-bhramad-bhramara-vibhrama-bhṛt kaṭākṣaḥ //

May Ambikā's sidelong glance protect you,
mingling with the trembling rays of luster
from her nails that shine out through the fingers
and across the hand that pulls the bowstring,
a glance that bears the graceful beauty
of gathering bees, drawn toward her ear
by an ornament of blossom clusters.

Here the visual image is somewhat complex in its use of poetic conventions and the technical terminology of archery. The glance from the goddess is considered to consist of black particles of light emerging from the eye, which serve as a visual counterpart of a line of bees. The hand that draws the bowstring is held partly closed, with the fingernails facing her cheek but with enough space between her fingers for the rays of light from the nails to emerge and play across the back of her hand, imitating visually the trembling filaments or sprays of a flower-blossom ornament decorating her ear and attracting the bees.

In its verbal structure conforms very closely to the pattern we have already seen several times as a favorite of Bāṇa's. The skeleton sentence is in a few short words, *ambikāyāḥ ... tvāṃ pātu ... kaṭakṣaḥ*, "May Ambikā's sidelong glance protect you," and the remainder of the verse consists of two long compound words, each taking up nearly an entire half of the verse, of which one provides a visual description of the glance and the other presents the comparison that rests on it. The effect, as in Bāna's verses, is to present the bulk of the description in two solid parts, one dealing purposefully with the visual situation at hand and

24. Ingalls 1965, 476, n. on vs. 100.

25. Ingalls 1965, 32.

26. *Amaruśataka* 1.1 = *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 100. For the technical meaning of the term *khaṭakāmukha* see Ingalls 1965, 476, n. on vs. 100.

the other offering a figurative counterpart to this, against which the essential action appears in short simple words as the event being interpreted through the poet's creative vision.

The verse also offers ample evidence of the other type of verbal boldness we have been examining, that of striking but appropriately used sound effects, here most noticeable in the rumbling chain of alliteration that runs through all but the final word of the last quarter of the verse, in imitation of the buzzing line of bees.

The underlying focus in this verse is on the same mixture of love and power that we have seen in Bāṇa's Śaiva verses. The sidelong glance is a vehicle of compassion both in erotic poetry and in reference to the Goddess (here referred to with a name that is an affectionate term for a mother), and in this instance the love and compassion of the Goddess is mixed with her martial prowess: her loving glance is directed on the reader while she is in the very act of accomplishing the protective but frightening task of killing a demon with her arrow.

As it happens, the image of the goddess in battle, together with the theme of her particular combination not only of compassion and martial prowess but of feminine beauty as well, is the topic of most of Bāṇa's surviving verse poetry, if we can accept as accurate the constant ascription to him of the *Caṇḍīśataka*, a century of verses in the long *sragdharā* meter, each of them describing the goddess Durgā or Pārvatī in or near the act of killing the demon Mahiṣa. The verses are in the form of the benedictory or, in a few instances, salutatory verses we have already seen, but might also be viewed as a collection of reflections on a particular iconographic form of Durgā, called "Mahiṣamardinī," which depicts the slaying of Mahiṣa, and often (as in many of Bāṇa's verses) focuses specifically on the moment at which the goddess stabs the demon with her trident or (as most often in Bāṇa's verses) kicks him in the head with her adorable left foot.

Some Sanskrit works supply a background story explaining why Bāṇa chose to compose a collection of verses describing the act of the Angry Goddess kicking a demon in the head. In a Jain version of the story,[27] the incident involves Bāṇa's relationship with his wife, who is described as the daughter (in some other versions, the sister) of the poet Mayūra, Bāṇa's colleague in the court at Kannauj and the author of the *Sūryaśataka*, a century of verses in praise of the Sun god.

Bāṇa and his wife have been having a quarrel that extends to the wee hours of the following morning, when Mayūra happens to walk by their house and hears through the window their shouting, followed by the sound of a jingling anklet, which he correctly interprets as meaning that Bāṇa's wife has just kicked

27. Bühler 1872, 111–15; Quackenbos 1917, 21ff.

him in the head while he was bowing at her feet. His interpretation is verified when he then hears Bāṇa recite the following verse, which begs for forgiveness by way of a fairly clever compliment:

Verse 8. Bāṇa to his wife[28]

gata-prâyâ râtriḥ kṛśa-tanu śaśī śīryata iva
pradīpo 'yaṃ nidrā-vaśam upagato ghūrṇita iva /
praṇāmânto mānas tyajasi na tathâpi krudham aho
kuca-pratyāsattyā hṛdayam api te subhru kaṭhinam

Slender lady, the night is almost gone,
the moon seems to be fading,
and this lamp has begun to flicker,
as if nodding off to sleep itself.
And yet, for all my bowing down,
you still refuse to soften.
Such anger! Lady of beautiful brows,
perhaps your heart has grown so firm
by lying near your breasts.

Mayūra replied by shouting through the window, "It's a pretty good verse, except that instead of calling my daughter a lady with beautiful eyebrows (*subhrū*), you should have called her a hothead (*caṇḍī*), because that's what she has always been." And this led to Bāṇa's recognition that it might be helpful, in his current domestic impasse and in a metaphorical sort of way, to compose at least 100 verses describing how the powerful goddess Caṇḍī gained victory by using her beautiful left foot to kick the head of the reprehensible demon Mahiṣa as he groveled at her feet.

Bāṇa's desire to placate his wife is not the only motive given in the story, which continues with further details providing a somewhat different, and no more favorable, explanation. Upon hearing her father's remark, Bāṇa's irritated wife cursed her father to become a leper at the touch of the juice of the betel she was chewing, and which she spat out the window in such a way that the falling juice contaminated Mayūra as envisioned. In search of a cure, Mayūra composed

28. Attributed to Bāṇa in the story, and cited in Bühler 1872, 114 and in Quackenbos 1917, 21, where the numerous quotations of the verse in anthologies and their variant readings are detailed. I have used the reading given in *Subhaṣitaratnakoṣa* 654, with the substitution of the supposedly original reading *subhru* for the emendation *caṇḍi* suggested by Mayūra in the story. Although the *Subhāṣitāvalī* anthology ascribed to Vallabha, like the stories, attributes the verse to Bāṇa, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* itself attributes it to a poet named Mahodadhi.

his century of verses in praise of the Sun god, and upon reciting his poetry in court he received his cure. Bāṇa, jealous of his father-in-law's achievement, cut off his own hands and feet and offered his verses in praise of the Goddess to secure his own cure, with equal success.

For reasons that go beyond the unreliability of such stories, the *Caṇḍīśataka* does not loom large in modern scholarly references to Bāṇa's poetic corpus, and before I turn to its verses I must say a word about the criteria for judging which of the verses attributed to Bāṇa are likely to be his. It appears in even the most detailed examination of such verses—Ludwik Sternbach's admirable article "On the Unknown Poetry of Bāṇa,"[29] which carefully documents all of the known attributions—that this judgment must often rest on subjective decisions. As a quick example, consider the following verse, attributed to Bāṇa in only one manuscript:

Verse 9. On making love[30]

viśrāntiṃ nūpure yāte śrūyate rasanā-dhvaniḥ /
prāyaḥ kānte rati-śrānte kāminī puruṣāyate //

Her belt starts jingling when her anklets stop:
when he gets tired, she moves on top.

The verse is a little joke, touching on a common topic of Sanskrit amorous poetry, but notable chiefly for its compression and for the clever way that the mock aphoristic flavor of the second half of the verse is marked by the internal rhyme, a device not all that frequent in Sanskrit poetry, but one that we have already seen being put to more serious use by Bāṇa. Sternbach declares that the verse cannot be by Bāṇā, apparently on grounds of sexual propriety: "the theme of the verse does not seem to allow us to assume that it is a Bāṇa's verse (it deals with love in enjoyment when a woman takes an active role in love sports)."[31] But only one page earlier, Sternbach enthusiastically accepts as Bāṇa's a verse depicting an act of barnyard sex, describing it as "an excellent description of a goat in passion."[32] More to the point, Sternbach has no objections to the authenticity of the following verse attributed repeatedly to Bāṇa, which deals with the same topic of sexual intercourse in which the woman is on top:

29. Sternbach 1979.

30. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 592. Attributed to Bāṇa in the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara* of Nandana, according to Sternbach 1979, 130, verse 51.

31. Sternbach 1979, 114, section 10.5.

32. Sternbach 1979, 113, n. 21 on section 7. The verse is the one beginning *ghrātvā śroṇīm*, "Sniffing the butt ..."; for text and citations see Sternbach 1979, 121, entry 13.

Verse 10. Amorous benediction[33]

patatu tavôrasi satataṃ dayitā-dhammilla-mallikā-prakaraḥ /
rati-rasa-rabhasa-kaca-graha-lulitâlaka-vallarī-galitaḥ //

May there always fall upon your chest
a pile of jasmine blossoms
from your lover's hairknot,
slipping down from the curls
disheveled by your rough pulling
of her hair in passion.

It may be that Sternbach did not recognize this verse as dealing with the topic in question, or perhaps simply that the more extensive manuscript evidence for the attribution moved the matter beyond the need for a subjective judgment. For our purposes it is worth noting that this verse fits rather well with the characteristic features we have noted in Bāṇa's verses of religious benediction. We see here the same judicious use of verbal choices: the opening phrase *patatu tavorasi satatam*, with its proliferation of short vowels and unaspirated voiceless *t*'s imitates the pattering sound of falling blossoms, while the long compound that follows goes well with the image of the accumulating heap, and the even longer compound that follows, running through the entire second half of the verse with a rollicking sequence of alliteration that replicates the extended and uninterrupted bout of passion.

On the level of ideas, the verse has clear redeeming social value even if viewed purely as amorous poetry, as Ingalls explained in introducing the theme of this sexual position in the final paragraph of his introduction to the anthology section on "Love in Enjoyment,"[34] explaining that "the verses on *viparītarata*, which depart the farthest from western standards of propriety, were read as much for their sentimental as for their erotic value," and that such scenes "are used to furnish an impression of intimacy between lovers, born of long affection, and of the heroine's desire to please her lover rather than herself."

It is this emotional suggestion referred to by Ingalls that allows the verse to be framed in the verbal mode of a benediction, a choice that is certainly bold in itself, and which raises interesting implications that would have made this little poem a good choice for an opening verse in the *Amaruśataka*, had not the existence of Bāṇa's verse *kṣipto hastâvalagnaḥ* (Verse 6 above) provided a better one.

33. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 588.
34. Ingalls 1965, 200.

For the evaluation of the *Caṇḍīśataka*, given its theme, a greater problem than sexual scruples is the anti-religious bias that has led some scholars to ignore benedictory verses in their consideration of the history of Sanskrit poetry. For example, when D. D. Kosambi, one of the editors of the text volume of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* anthology, lists the works of Bāṇa, he takes the trouble to state that the *Pārvatīpariṇaya* attributed to a Bāṇa is by someone else, but makes no mention at all of the *Caṇḍīśataka*,[35] and it is hard not to believe that this omission is connected with his vehement distaste for ostensibly purely religious poetry; in reference to the opening sections of the anthology, which are devoted to benedictory verses of the time we have been examining, he says "The first six [sections] are not fully comprehensible today except to a specially trained antiquarian.... Why was so much space for religious verse necessary when a benedictory stanza or two would have served better, repelling fewer readers in later days?"[36]

Similarly, Pollock omits any mention of the *Caṇḍīśataka* in discussing Bāṇa's poetic output, just as, in an extended treatment of the lyric poetry of Jagannātha Pāṇḍitarāja, Pollock treats Jagannātha as the author of a single collection of poetry, the *Bhāminīvilāsa*,[37] even though the volume of collected works from which he takes the text of the verses in that collection contains alongside it other collections by the same author, including Jagannātha's five famous *Laharī* collections of lyric verse; the distinction may involve the fact that while the *Bhāminīvilāsa* deals with a woman, the *Laharī*s are devoted to divinities: Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, and Sūrya. The same sentiment may underlie Pollock's general deprecation of the benedictory verse as a form of creative poetry:

> Within perhaps fifty years [after the middle of the twelfth century], creative Sanskrit culture in Kashmir all but vanished. The production of literature in all of the major genres ceased.... The wide repertory of forms was reduced to the *stotra* (hymn or prayer), hitherto near the margins of literary culture.[38]

For both Kosambi and Pollock the antipathy toward religion is a part of their concern with larger social issues. The topic was explored by Kosambi in his essay "The Social Functions of Literature" in the text volume of the anthology,[39] to which Ingalls provided a reply in his own essay "On the Passing of Judgments"

35. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lxxxv–lxxxvi.
36. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, li.
37. Pollock 2003, 96 ff.
38. Pollock 2003, 92.
39. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lvii–lxii.

in the translation volume,[40] arguing that Sanskrit poetry should be judged in the first instance by the criteria that authors within that tradition themselves claimed to be following. Pollock has noted ways in which views of those criteria within the tradition underwent change in the late premodern period in terms of their social expectations,[41] and the examples that will be given in the concluding part of this chapter suggest that Bāṇa himself may have foreshadowed some of those developments in his own choice of poetic topics.

In any case, if Pollock's general remarks on the *stotra* form were to be used to exclude a verse such as *kṣipto hastāvalagnaḥ* from the status of creative poetry, that outcome would clearly be at odds with the subjective judgments of a great many expert readers of poetry within the Sanskrit tradition in the centuries following Bāṇa's time, as can be seen both from its inclusion in anthologies expressly devoted to excellent poetry (and in the *Amaruśataka* itself, for that matter) and also from the admiring and detailed comments of Sanskrit critics both in commentaries on the *Amaruśataka* and in treatises on poetics.

In fairness, however, it must be said that just as a religious theme should not preclude the inclusion of a verse in the category of good poetry, neither should it guarantee it. Aside from the fact that literature of any kind in Sanskrit—expository and narrative as well as poetic—may be composed in verse, there are reasons beyond the poetic why some religious verses have been collected and preserved. A particularly instructive case in point is the *Devīśataka* of the great poetician Ānandavardhana, a collection of his verses on the Goddess which contains very impressive verbal trickery, and is thus verse literature with its own value even beyond its religious achievement, but which by his own definitions elsewhere does not constitute what he would call good poetry.[42]

That the *Caṇḍīśataka* in particular is by modern western criteria not as poetically interesting as one might hope is a judgment mentioned by more than one western scholar, although those who have considered the poem most attentively have noted that this opinion is at odds with that expressed within the Sanskrit tradition. Bühler, the first modern scholar to examine the poem carefully, pointed out this difference of opinion at the beginning of his characterization of the work:[43]

> The tortuosity of the construction, the double-entendres and puns, and the quaint similes in which it abounds, will make it dear to the heart of every true Pandit. But these qualities make it rather an object of serious study than of enjoyment on first hearing or reading,

40. Ingalls 1965, 49–53.
41. Pollock 2005, 26–39.
42. Ingalls 1989.
43. Bühler 1872, 111.

> and they render it improbable that European critics will accord to it the epithet of—'uttamâ kavitâ', — "first rate poetry," which—according to the opinion of my learned native friends, to whom I showed the poem—is its due.

Quackenbos, the author of a translation of the poem with extensive annotations, is similarly disappointed, and also refers to western expectations:[44]

> And it may be noted that the lack of variety thus engendered sometimes approaches monotony in this poem of Bāṇa's. On the whole the *Sūryaśataka* [by Bāṇa's colleague Mayūra] appears to me to be the more scholarly and thoughtful work of the two. The *Caṇḍīśataka* is distinctly in lighter vein, and its stanzas, if measured by occidental ideas and standards, often lack dignity and seriousness.

It may be that the greater richness of poetic accomplishment we have seen in some of Bāṇa's other benedictory verses was not the goal in this particular collection, and that in meeting its original purpose—perhaps by offering a series of daily passages for use in contemplating an iconographical presentation of the Mahiṣamardinī figure, somewhat after the fashion of a modern tear-away calendar pad—the repetition of the same theme from verse to verse was not an obstacle. Quackenbos notes repeatedly his observation that in comparison with Mayūra's poem (which he translated and annotated in the same volume), Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka* is relatively lacking in "the rather elaborate similes that occur here and there in the stanzas of the *Sūryaśataka*."[45] He is referring to the sort of conceit we have seen at work in poems such as verses 4 and 5 given earlier, and the same might be said about the relative absence of other techniques we have seen used in Bāṇa's benedictory verses, such as his attention to what can be achieved by using compounds of particular lengths. In the *Caṇḍīśataka* long compounds are only rarely used, and the emphasis is more on superficial sound effects in shorter words. A good example is the verse that Quackenbos marks as being quoted in anthologies and works on poetics more often than any other verse in the collection;[46] it is distinguished by a conspicuous amount of alliteration:

Verse 11. On the Goddess and Mahiṣa[47]

vidrāṇe rudra-vṛnde savitari tarale vajriṇi dhvasta-vajre
jātâśaṅke śaśâṅke viramati maruti tyakta-vaire kubere /

44. Quackenbos 1965 [1917], 265.
45. Quackenbos 1965 [1917], 264.
46. Quackenbos 1965 [1917], 262–63, 328–29.
47. *Caṇḍīśataka* 66.

vaikuṇṭhe kuṇṭhitâstre mahiṣam atiruṣaṃ pauruṣôpaghna-nighnaṃ
nirvighnaṃ nighnatī vaḥ śamayatu duritaṃ bhūri-bhāvā bhavānī //

When Rudra's troop had fled, and Sūrya trembled,
and Indra had lost his discus, and Candra had became afraid,
and Marut had stopped, and Kubera had quit fighting,
and Viṣṇu's weapon had been blunted,
Bhavānī killed with ease the raging Mahiṣa,
who had trusted his own manliness for protection.
May she, whose forms of being are many,
bring your sin to an end.

It is because of the alliteration that the verse is cited in treatises on poetics, but even here one may see elements of Bāṇa's technique similar to those used in verse 5 given earlier, describing Guha. Throughout the greater part of the present verse, the use of long compounds would be inappropriate given the need to offer a long list of short items. The parts of each of those items are held together by the clear alliteration. One might argue that in the one place where a comparatively long compound is used, the choice is poetically effective in highlighting the single contrast to the fecklessness of the gods: *pauruṣôpaghna-nighnaṃ*, "who had trusted his own manliness for protection," in reference to the demon Mahiṣa in contrast to all the male divinities who had given up or fled. The overall point, of course, is that in the end, victory belonged not to any male but to the female goddess who used her own form of prowess to kill the demon despite his manly stand. Her action is mentioned directly after his, and tied to it by continuing the pattern of alliteration used in the compound just mentioned: *nirvighnaṃ nighnatī*, "killing [him] with ease," literally "without obstacle" despite his manliness.

Only occasionally in the *Caṇḍīśataka* are even longer compounds used in effective ways similar to those in some of the other verses we have seen. A good example is the following verse, playing on the apparent awkwardness of the goddess's exploit in terms of gender roles, and on her absolute mastery of the situation despite those concerns:

Verse 12. On the Goddess and Mahiṣa[48]

bhartā kartā trilokyās tripura-vadha-kṛtī paśyati tryakṣa eṣa
kva strī kvâyodhanêcchā na tu sadṛśam idaṃ prastutaṃ kiṃ mayêti /
matvā savyāja-savyêtara-caraṇa-calâṅguṣṭha-koṇâbhimṛṣṭaṃ
sadyo yā lajjitêvâsura-patim avadhīt pārvatī pātu sā vaḥ //

48. *Caṇḍīśataka* 47.

"My three-eyed husband, creator of the universe,
destroyer of the Triple City, is here to watch.
What does a woman have to do with using weapons?
This is not proper. What have I set out to do?"
As if embarrassed by these thoughts,
Pārvatī killed the demon lord in an instant,
tapping him with the tip of the left toenail that she flicked.[49]
May she protect you.

Here we see the same playing with verbal repetition as in most of the verses in the collection, beginning with the rhyming of the first words, and the repetition of *tri-* at the beginning of several words in the rest of the first line. But we see also a conspicuously long compound later on in the verse, one which is used quite effectively in suddenly changing the pacing of the verse into a sudden rush in which an entire decisive action is accomplished all at once and with startling ease: *savyāja-savyêtara-caraṇa-calâṅguṣṭha-koṇâbhimṛṣṭaṃ*, "being tapped with the tip of the nail on the left big toe that she flicked." The following word expresses directly the main point of the description: *sadyaḥ*, "all at once"; the surface idea is that because Pārvatī was embarrassed by taking on a man's work while her husband was watching, she suddenly decided to get it over with as quickly as possible, but the underlying idea is that (in addition to having had to take on the task because her husband stayed on the sideline) she was all along capable of carrying out this great exploit with consummate ease.

The epithet *try-akṣa*, used here in naming Śiva and led up to by the two previous instances of *tri-* in the same line, is a particularly apt choice from among the many names of that god.[50] In addition to strengthening the fact of his watching, in that he is able to watch with more eyes than normal observers, it also emphasizes his own destructive power, both through its echoing of the compound *tripura-vadha-kṛtī* that precedes it and in its reference to an especially dramatic instrument of Śiva's destructive power, the third eye with its consuming flame. Yet in this setting of a verse dealing with wifely emotions it also reminds the reader of the theme of how even the more frightening aspects of Śiva can have a playful and affectionate side as well.

The triad of appearances here of the word-opening *tri-* ("three") call to mind another of Bāṇa's verses dealing with three sets of three, and one which may be

49. In taking *savyāja-savyêtara* as a roundabout way of saying "left" ("not really the one that is other than the left one"), I am following Quackenbos, who in turn is relying on the Sanskrit commentators on the *Caṇḍīśataka*. This odd wording was evidently chosen for the alliteration it provides.

50. I am grateful to Yigal Bronner for pointing out the importance of this epithet here.

the best example of Bāṇa-style poetic technique in verses of this sort. It is a poem that does not actually appear in the *Caṇḍīśataka* as we now have it, but which is a verse on exactly the same theme and in the same benedictory format and *sragdharā* meter as used in that collection, and attributed to Bāṇa in the anthology in which it is preserved. It describes the moment, often depicted in sculpture, when the goddess raises her arm to plunge the trident into the demon at her foot:

Verse 13. On the Goddess and Mahiṣa[51]

pādâvaṣṭambha-namrīkṛta-mahiṣa-tanor ullasad-bāhu-mūlaṃ
śūlaṃ prollāsayantyāḥ saralita-vapuṣo madhya-bhāgasya devyāḥ /
viśliṣṭa-spaṣṭa-dṛṣṭônnata-virala-vali-vyakta-gaurântarālās
tisro vaḥ pāntu rekhāḥ krama-vaśa-vikasat-kañcuka-prānta-muktāḥ //

When the Goddess plants the pillar
of her foot on the buffalo demon,
making his body bow,
she stretches her own body,
armpit flashing,
to brandish the trident,
and in that step the edges
of her bodice gape, exposing
three white lines,
quite distinctly revealed
as the folds at her waist,
with their prominent ridges,
spread open.
May those three lines protect you.

To understand the image at work in this verse it is important to have a clear image in mind of the iconographic situation. The demon is scrunched underneath the left foot of the goddess, who is holding the prongs of her trident down low near his body. The trident has a long staff, and the goddess holds the other end of it in her right hand, which she is raising high in order to put the trident in position for striking. In the process of lifting her hand, she arches her torso gracefully to one side, and the bottom hem of her fairly short bodice is also lifted up and away from her body, exposing more of her waist.

The verse begins with a physical contrast similar to that at the beginning of the first verse discussed in this chapter. The opening compound reveals that the

51. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1.25.4, attributed to Bāṇa.

body of the demon Mahiṣa has been forced by the goddess's foot to bend over, so that he is bowing to her, while the other compound in the first quarter of the verse tells us that her armpit has been exposed, indicating that she has raised her arm, so that she is towering above the demon.

The details that follow involve contrasts associated with the goddess Pārvatī. One contrast is that between the feminine beauty of her body and her practice of yogic austerities, a topic treated with great power in the third canto of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*. Here the beauty of her body is a prominent feature of the type of sculpture that underlies this verse, with her graceful bending, and in the verse itself is indicated by (or rather, serves as justification for) her possession of the highly-regarded feature of the three folds at the waist, called the *trivalī*, which is a standard object of description in Sanskrit poetry.[52] Experienced readers will be reminded of her apparently incongruous expertise in the practice of difficult austerities by the information that when these folds of skin are opened by her bending at the waist, the skin within them is light in color (as explicitly noted with the word *gaura*), as is the normally concealed skin in her armpit (as implied by the participle *ullasad*); although Pārvatī has light-colored skin to begin with (hence her name Gaurī), her practice of yoga included long sessions of exposure to the sun and fires, as described by Kālidāsa,[53] and the resulting suntan, as mentioned both by Kālidāsa and in the verses on the same story composed by Udbhaṭa and embedded in his treatise on poetic figures, darkened those parts of her body that were normally exposed.[54]

In the present verse, the additional theme of martial action is added to the contrast just described, giving rise to two further contrasts at work in the underpinnings of the verse: the contrast between the goddess' feminine beauty (involving a superficial presumption of frailty) with her taking up of arms to fight against the dangerous demon, and the contrast between her spiritual withdrawal and yogic contemplation on the one hand with this same career of active and apparently angry warfare on the other. This complex set of paradoxes is an extended form of the contrasts we have already seen at work in many of Bāṇa's verses on Śaiva themes.

The visual work to which these exposed bits of white skin are put is also complex, and quite original and striking in its construction. The visual focus, as made explicit in the short words at the beginning of the fourth quarter of the verse, is on the three horizontal white lines on the waist of the goddess, suddenly

52. For example, see Ingalls 1965, 153, paragraph 2.

53. *Kumārasaṃbhava* 5.20ff. Bāṇa also refers to women's yogic exposure to heat in a verse preserved as *Subhāṣitratnakoṣa* 1434, on the wives of the king's rival.

54. *Kumārasaṃbhava* 5.21; *Kāvyālaṅkārasārasaṃgraha* verse 3.2 under *kārikā* 3.4.

exposed by her heroic gesture. But these three lines are also replicated on a larger scale: the group of lines at the waist serve as the center line in a taller set of three horizontal white lines, in which the top white line, up above the waist, is presented by her flashing armpit which is revealed in the same gesture, while the bottom white line is formed by the gleaming head of the iron trident, which she holds low near her foot. And as a final grace note to this complex of visual replications, in the head of the trident there is one final set of three horizontal white lines, this time in miniature, formed by the three prongs of that weapon.

The entire visual thrust of the poem, then, is clearly to make it emphatically obvious that the goddess is displaying three horizontal white lines at this dramatic moment on the edge of her victory over the demon. In a poet like Bāṇa we should expect that this image is not presented simply as a striking effect in itself (as we might think possible if it were part of a series of visual descriptions in some of the long *mahākāvya*s by other poets), but that instead it will have some deeper connection with the topic and goal of the verse.

To any Indian reader the significance of the three horizontal white lines displayed by the goddess will be immediately obvious. They are the emblem of her husband Śiva, the famous set of lines called the *tripuṇḍra*, drawn with white ashes on the forehead and other parts of the body by his devotees, and used in countless other settings to mark an allegiance or association with the great god and his power.

The delectable question of what motive Pārvatī herself might have had in showing this emblem—whether to express her own solidarity and association with Śiva, or to generate a device through which to direct his grace upon the reader, or to slyly tease her husband for his absence on the field of battle by indicating that she is now doing what he should have done, or simply as a Śaiva version of "showing the colors" at this crowning moment of triumph, or any combination of these or other motives—I leave for the reader to savor. Before leaving the verse I will simply point out that it contains examples of each of the four types of boldness that we have been interested in. On a verbal level it puts to good use both phonetic devices—for example, the rhyming of *-mūlam* with the following word *śūlam* to emphasize the connection between the positioning of the weapon and the flashing of the armpit, or the repetition of the retroflex conjuncts at the beginning of the second quarter to mark the sudden visual popping out of the white lines—as well as the employment in the second half of the verse of Bāṇa's trademark pattern of a skeleton sentence in short words with the supporting descriptions in very long compounds filling up the rest of the lines. And on a visual level it presents the very striking image of the triple replication of the triple lines, and on a deeper level connects this, through suggestions based on implied references to older poems and myths, with the complex of paradoxes

associated with the goddess and through them to the verse's main goals of praise and benediction.

The verse also serves as a particularly good example of an aspect of Bāṇa's influence as a writer of verse poetry that is more difficult to document than the impact of his general techniques, but which is equally significant, namely the imitation by later poets of quite specific techniques apparently invented by Bāṇa or first used to especially striking effect by him. A case in point is the device we have just seen, in which a particular shape or visual configuration is replicated threefold in the verse, by the description of a vertical stack of similar shapes, all of them connected to something of greater importance than the visual repetition itself. The device is put to use, with different specific images and settings but with the same technique of multiplication of parallel images, in several of the poets who will be listed in the next chapter as followers of Bāṇa.

For now a single example will suffice. Consider the following verse from a play by Rājaśekhara (ca. 880–920), which describes a young woman doing a dance in which she performs with what I take to be a diabolo, the juggling toy made of two cones joined at their tips, with or without a short axle, and set spinning by making it slide on a string tied to the ends of two sticks held in one's hands:

Verse 14. On a girl dancing with a diabolo:[55]

colâñcalena cala-hāra-latā-prakāṇḍair
veṇī-guṇena ca balād valayī-kṛtena /
helâhita-bhramaraka-bhrama-maṇḍalībhiś
chatra-trayaṃ racayatîva ciraṃ nata-bhrūḥ //

With her twirling skirt,
with her long swinging strands of pearls,
and with the whirling rope of her braided hair,
she seems to construct three parasols,
by forming these into circles
as for some time she gracefully
spins the diabolo,
she with the arching
eyebrow.

Here the three cones that she constructs through the gyroscopic twirling of (to list them, as the poet does, in vertical sequence from the bottom up) her skirt, necklaces, and braid are duplicated by another three cones: the two cones

55. Rājaśekhara, *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* 2.9 = *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 525.

of the spinning diabolo, and, more importantly, the arch of her eyebrow, mentioned in the very last word of the verse in order to make the verse's main point: out of all the twirling and spinning, the image that remains with the observer describing the scene is that she looked at him, and with a coquettish glance. The fact that it is this image of her as *nata-bhrūḥ*, "with arching eyebrow," that abides with him is perhaps suggested by the possibility of construing the adverb immediately before it, *ciram*, "for a long time," with this final adjective, in addition to its more obvious construction with the main verb.

Here again we have an imaginative poetic construction resting on the depiction of an unusual object—so unusual for us nowadays that it is not certain what the *bhramaraka* actually was[56]—but the boldness in concept and the boldness in wording and in the patterns of sounds are all focused on the delivery of a clear poetic point.

How many such specific devices existed in Bāṇa's original corpus of verse poetry and were imitated by his later admirers is something that, lamentably, we cannot know, given the clear evidence that we have lost not only many of the verses composed by Bāṇa, but also entire longer works in which some of those verses must originally have been set. Scattered throughout the old anthologies are several groups of verses which, when brought together and examined in each other's company, strongly suggest that they were composed as parts of sequences in which the verses may have been arranged in a particular order and appear to have been products of highly original poetic experiments. In what follows I discuss two such sequences of orphaned verses, one involving descriptions of moonlight and containing striking evidence of metrical experimentation, and the other involving a sequence of verses describing a poor traveler in winter, and providing evidence both of experimentation on the level of vocabulary and repeated words, and also of Bāṇa's role in disputes on the proper social and emotional content of Sanskrit poetry.

B. Anthology Verses: The Moonlight Sequence[57]

Three verses in the old *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* are almost certainly connected with each other, as shown by the fact that in addition to sharing the theme of the

56. Ingalls tentatively called it a yo-yo, as explained in Ingalls 1965, 179, paragraph 4, and Ingalls 1965, 505, n. on vs. 517. I have called it a diabolo because of other verses in the original surrounding passage (*Viddhaśālabhañjikā* 2.9, in the part of the play dealing with the match-making dance), where it seems to be tossed from the string. The note on the verse by Ingalls also explains the apparently matrimonial goal of the dance, drawing on references to the same activity in Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita*.

57. This section is based in part on an oral presentation, "A Wild Goose on the Lake of Heaven: Bāṇa on the Loose," at the International Conference "Sensitive Readings, Far-Reaching

description of moonlight they also share a meter that is not found in the same form in any other known verses. Two of the three verses are expressly attributed to Bāṇa, and that the third is also from the same source is strongly suggested by its being discussed together with one of the other two verses in a passage in Rājaśekhara's treatise on poetry.

We can no longer know the original setting of these verses. In the anthology they appear, like all of its selections, as *muktaka*s, that is, "loose" or unconnected verses, grouped only casually into sections on particular topics, in a way that is relevant only to their purpose in the anthology rather than in the works from which they were extracted. Of the three verses in question, only two are placed in the section on moonlight, while the third, because it describes the usefulness of the moonlight to women who are sneaking off to love trysts in the night, is placed instead in the section on wanton women. Most likely the verses were extracted from a stage play, since Sanskrit plays were the favorite source for the anthologist.[58] And Bāṇa was credited by more than one Sanskrit literary critic as having written a play of the *nāṭaka* type entitled *Śāradacandrikā*, "Autumn Moonlight."[59]

Whether or not these verses came from that lost play, it is clear from even their superficial features that they have a stronger connection with each other than the "looseness" of their eventual presentation as isolated anthology verses would suggest. More interestingly, a detailed examination of the poetic techniques at work in these verses, as in the other sequence discussed at the end of this chapter, shows that in composing them Bāṇa himself was rather more loose than might have been suspected in terms of his approach to some of the more rigid conventions of Sanskrit *kāvya* poetry.

For the present triad of verses the most obvious convention of interest is the metrical pattern used in all three. As Ingalls notes in commenting on the first of the three verses in the anthology,[60] in the form in which Bāṇa uses it, the meter is not defined in any of the existing Sanskrit treatises, but it appears to be based on the meter *Śaśivadanā*, defined as follows in the early work on prosody by Piṅgala:

U U U U – U – U U U –, U U – U U – U – U – (11 + 10 = 21)

Implications: Penetrations into South Asian Traditions," held in honor of David Shulman's 60th birthday at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 2008.

58. Ingalls 1965, 35–39.

59. Sternbach 1979, 110, paragraph 3.

60. Ingalls 1965, 526, n. on vs. 832.

The meter as defined is of the *vṛtta* type—here I speak specifically of the *samavṛtta* meters—in which a verse consists of four quarters, each following the same fixed pattern, within which the metrical length of every syllable is specified as either light (indicated above as breve) or heavy (shown as long). And for relatively long patterns such as this, the definition also specifies a required word-break point (*yati*, shown above by a comma), which for this particular meter divides the 21 syllables of each quarter into a group of 11 syllables followed by a group of ten syllables. The importance of the specified break in such meters is emphasized by Pollock in his detailed study of the history of Sanskrit versification,[61] in which he explains how these patterns are inflexible to an extent unparalleled in other classical languages, and how, given the rigidity of the defined pattern, the main scope for interesting variations is in the treatment of word breaks.

In these verses by Bāṇa, however, the pattern defined earlier is apparently treated not according to the strict rules of the Sanskrit *vṛtta* meters, but rather with the other major category of verse patterns used in fancy Sanskrit poetry, that of the *mātrā* poetry associated with Prakrit songs, even though the pattern in question is not found among any of the extant definitions of metrical patterns of that type. Such verses, rather than following an unvarying pattern of light and heavy syllables, are structured around a pattern of moric groups in which substitutions such as that of two light syllables for one heavy syllable are fairly fully allowed, so that there is ample room for variation and no fixed break is possible in the absence of a rigid background pattern.

Bāṇa's use of the meter in these verses is highly unusual in two ways. First, he employs *mātrā*-style substitutions in a few places, while retaining the defined pattern often enough—especially in the opening quarters—to make it clear that he is working against the expected pattern rather than abandoning it. The technique allows Bāṇa to achieve special effects of pacing and emphasis. In giving the Sanskrit text of Bāṇa's verses, I have indicated in bold type the places where he has made such substitutions (two light syllables in place of one heavy syllable, or vice versa) relative to the defined pattern.

Second, Bāṇa often runs past the expected break after the eleventh syllable, once again in ways that suggest he is playing on the expectation of such a break rather than ignoring it. The effects are similar to those achieved by the substitutions just mentioned, but also are used for certain types of grouping or punctuation within the verse. In giving the Sanskrit text, I have added numerals to the right of each line of transliterated verse to indicate whether the break occurs at the normative point (after 11 syllables, or rather where that count would be reached had any metrical substitutions not been made) or whether

61. Pollock 1977.

the word in progress at that point continues for an extra syllable, ending after 12 syllables.

The effect of both devices together—metrical substitutions and running past the break—is a playful one, perhaps associated in Bāṇa's mind with the dancing quality of the spreading moonlight that he is describing.

Now for the actual verses, which I give here not in the order in which they appear in the anthology, but in that of what I suppose to be the chronological order of the scenes they describe. The first verse describes the moon as it first begins to rise, and is also a good verse to begin with because we happen to have some evidence in Sanskrit texts concerning both the prehistory and the later impact of the verse.

Verse 15. On the rising moon:[62]

rajani-purandhri-rodhra-tilakas timira-dvipa-yūtha-kesarī (11)
rajatamayo 'bhiṣeka-kalaśaḥ kusumāyudha-medinī-pateḥ / (11)
*ayam udayâcalâika-**cūḍ**āmaṇir **abhi**nava-darpaṇo diśām* (11)
*udayati **gaga**na-**sara**si **haṃ**sasya hasann iva vibhramaṃ śaśī* // (12)

A red forehead-mark for the lady Night,
a lion for the elephants of darkness,
a silver bowl for the anointing
of the god of love as ruler of the earth:
here the moon is rising,
the sole crest-jewel of the Eastern Mountain,
a brand-new mirror for the horizons,
laughing at the graceful movement
of a wild goose on the lake of heaven.

In thinking about what might have been bold in Bāṇa's approach to this verse, it is useful to try to imagine the impact the verse might have made on its first hearers. This is a difficult task for us today, and only partly because none of us knows Sanskrit as well as many of Bāṇa's audience must have. A larger problem is that the real impact of verses like this depended heavily on references to other verses with which the audience was familiar, and we have lost a great deal of that corpus of poetry.

Our knowledge of this verse's prehistory comes from the chapter in Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* on the different ways in which poets have borrowed from the work of earlier poets, one of many passages in that work that are heartbreakingly unique in their informativeness, preserving as they do some part

62. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 930 (in "The Moon" section), attributed to Bāṇa.

of what the conversation of Sanskrit poets and critics might have been like in the literary salons in which they gathered. This particular verse is Rājaśekhara's example of the kind of borrowing that he calls the "collecting of rubies" (*māṇikyapuñja*),[63] in which a poet takes a single feature from each of a number of verses and combines them in a new way within a single verse. Rājaśekhara demonstrates this by quoting the full text of six verses—presumably from poets earlier than Bāṇa, but each of them otherwise unknown—from which he claims the six metaphors in Bāṇa's verse are taken: forehead mark, lion, bowl, crest-jewel, mirror, and goose. Beyond this he says nothing about the principle of Bāṇa's rearrangement.

On this question we have some help from Ingalls, who pointed out in a note to his translation that the opening metaphors refer to the changing color of the moon as it rises.[64] I would mention in addition that in the opening half of the verse Bāṇa used the normative breaking point within the line (that is, after 11 syllables, with 12 syllables following) as a device of punctuation, separating these progressive metaphors from each other. These changes in color—from red through tawny to white—are completed in the first half of the verse, a situation reflected by his using the defined metrical pattern for grouping or punctuation purposes in this half, at which point he breaks the rules to signal a change in content.

This bold change is signaled even before the point of the expected break is reached in the third line by the unexpected substitution of one heavy syllable for two light ones at the beginning of the word ***cūḍāmāṇi***. As this word completes yet another metaphor, we expect it to end at the eleventh syllable, but find instead that it continues on past the break. At this point, however, the surprise is not as complete as it might be, because although the poet has broken for the first time his pattern of ending each metaphor at the specified break, he has not technically broken the rules of the break itself, which is allowed to fall between members of a compound, as it does here in the middle of the compound *cūḍā-maṇi*. But Bāṇa does take the trouble to remind his audience that something is afoot by providing another little substitution immediately after this word, using two light syllables in place of one heavy one in ***abhi***nava.

The fourth line, in contrast, contains three major surprises. First, by the time Bāṇa reaches the break point he has already employed three metrical substitutions: two light syllables for one heavy in both ***gaga***na and ***sara***si, and one heavy syllable for two light ones in ***haṃ***sasya. Second, by virtue of these substitutions he has managed to produce a string, unprecedented for this metrical pattern,

63. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 13.

64. Ingalls 1965, 534, n. on vs. 930.

of ten light syllables in a row, culminating with an impressive thud in the heavy syllable *haṃ* at the point where there should be a break. And third, the break does not occur there, as the word *haṃsasya* has two more syllables still to come, and is not even a compound word like that in the third line. The combined effect of these three surprises is to place the strongest possible emphasis on the beginning of the word *haṃsasya*, "of a goose," an emphasis that serves several poetic purposes simultaneously. It stresses the action of laughing expressed by the verbal root *has/haṃs*, which is picked up in the present participle immediately following this noun, and is central in the delivery of the final trope: to say that the moon laughs at the goose is to indicate that it far outdoes the wild goose (a standard example of grace in motion in Sanskrit poetry) in its own graceful movement. But the surprising sound pattern also works to imitate both the jerking action of a goose taking flight from the surface of a lake, and the sound of laughter.

A potential source of information on the subsequent history of these innovations may be found in the fact that all of the treatises which give an example of the underlying *vṛtta* meter share a single verse, taken from the *Śiśupālavadha* of Māgha, as the example of the pattern. As one would expect in an august *mahākāvya*, where the historically Prakrit meters are avoided, Māgha does not stoop to make any of the *mātrā*-style substitutions that Bāṇa indulges in, but he appears to show some similarity with Bāṇa's technique in his treatment of the prescribed word break.

The verse describes the beginning of the marching forth of Kṛṣṇa's army from his seaside capital, and contrasts that army with the ocean:

Verse 16. Māgha on Kṛṣṇa's army and the ocean:[65]

turaga-śatâkulasya paritaḥ param eka-turaṃga-janmanaḥ (11)
pramathita-bhūbhṛtaḥ prati-pathaṃ mathitasya bhṛśaṃ mahībhṛtā / (11)
paricalato balânuja-balasya puraḥ satataṃ dhṛta-śriyaś (12)
cira-vigata-śriyo jala-nidheś ca tadâbhavad antaraṃ mahat // (11)

One was teeming with hundreds of horses on all sides,
the other had been the source of only one horse's birth;
one had demolished kings along every route,
the other had been vigorously churned with a mountain:
as the army of Balarāma's younger brother
marched forth from the city,
constantly bearing glory,
between it and the ocean,

65. *Śiśupālavadha* 3.82.

from which the goddess Śrī
had long ago departed,
the interval was great.

Here the metrical problem is in the third quarter, where the word *balasya* runs one syllable beyond the point of the prescribed break. For Pollock, this was exasperating evidence that the rule for the break in this pattern was unreliable to begin with.[66] But it could also be that Māgha, a poet who probably worked a generation or so after the time of Bāṇa, was actually imitating the punctuational use of running beyond the break he had seen at work in Bāṇa's verses. Māgha begins in a fashion similar to what we have just seen in the first half of Bāṇa's verse, here using the normative break as punctuation to keep separate two sets of references which are morphologically indistinguishable. If he does then follow Bāṇa's innovation, it is in switching to the device of flowing past the expected break in describing the unbroken possession of glory by the hero's army in the third quarter of the verse. And like Bāṇa he ends with a final fillip of clever poetic density: the phrase "great interval" applies both to the difference in glory between Kṛṣṇa's army, and simultaneously to the growing physical separation between them. Yet it can also be taken as a metapoetic reference, alluding to the fact that a word referring to the army has passed on beyond the normal location of the metrical break at the point in the verse at which the army is explicitly named.[67]

Whether or not Māgha is following Bāṇa and playing against a defined break in this particular verse—and if he did in fact consider the break a formal requirement in this meter, it is unlikely that he would have broken the rule in the context of a *mahākāvya* unless he were paying homage to a model recognized in his time as worthy of emulation—there is much further evidence pointing to Bāṇa and his associates in Kannauj as being connected with a new style of lyric poetry in which the old rules were no longer strictly obeyed. In this connection Pollock refers, on the strength of citations in the prosodical literature, to the *Caṇḍīśataka* attributed to Bāṇa and the *Sūryaśataka* of his colleague Mayūra as the most conspicuous examples of anomalous practices (while noting that such deviations are not apparent in the verses found in the prose works of Bāṇa or the drama attributed to his patron Harṣavardhana),[68] and wonders whether

66. Pollock 1977, 77, "This is clearly an unsatisfactory situation.... It should be clear that the verse has no fixed break, as we in fact find it described in some later textbooks ..."

67. I owe the last point to a comment made by Finnian Moore Gerety during a workshop at Harvard University on reading the verses of Bāṇa.

68. Pollock 1977, 77.

Mayūra or his "school" might have provided authority for greater liberality in this department.[69]

The second verse attributed to Bāṇa in the anthology is a description of events in the early evening, when women begin to travel surreptitiously to their lovers' homes, leading the anthologist, as I have mentioned, to place it not in the section on moonlight but in the one on wanton women, of which these *abhisārikā* women are an important subset:[70]

Verse 17. On the spreading moonlight:[71]

malayaja-paṅka-lipta-tanavo nava-hāra-latā-vibhūṣitāḥ (11)
sitatara-danta-patra-kṛta-vaktra-ruco rucirâmalâṃśukāḥ / (12)
śaśabhṛti ***vita****ta-dhāmni dhava****layati*** *dharām avibhāvyatāṃ gatāḥ* (12)
priya-vasatiṃ vrajanti sukham eva nirasta-bhiyo 'bhisārikāḥ // (12)

Their bodies are smeared with sandalwood ointment;
they are adorned with shining strings of pearls;
their faces are brightened by earrings of whitest ivory;
their garments are made of brilliantly spotless cloth.
As the moon with its spreading rays whitens the earth,
the women become undetectable.
Their fear dispelled, they move along quite easily
to lovers' homes for trysting.

Once again Bāṇa starts with the defined pattern to establish the prescribed break as the expectation against which he will work his boldness. He uses this break in the first line to separate the elements of the women's preparations: *malayaja-paṅka-lipta-tanavo*, they "have bodies smeared with sandalwood paste," which is white, and then, after the break, *nava-hāra-latā-vibhūṣitāḥ*, they are "adorned with new strings of pearls," also white.

But then in the second line he departs from the rule by having the expected break point fall in the very middle of the word *vaktra*, "face," pulling us up abruptly for emphasis at the very place where the conventional similarity between women and the moon resides. Already the prescribed break has been dispensed with, in a manner disallowed by the rules. Then in the third line he not only rolls past the prescribed breaking point, but gives us a running start at jumping through it by substituting two light syllables for a long one in *dhava****layati***, after having just used another such substitution in the compound word

69. Pollock 1977, 93.

70. On *abhisārikā* verses as a type, with reference to the present verse, see Ingalls 1965, 242, paragraph 2.

71. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 832 (in "The Wanton" section), attributed to Bāṇa.

that precedes this, ***vitata***. This result is a wonderfully dancing line, liltingly imitating the visual scene it describes: *śaśabhṛti vitata-dhāmni dhavalayati dharām avibhāvyatāṃ gatāḥ*, "as the moon with its spreading rays whitens the earth, they (that is, the women) become undetectable." With all the white they are wearing, together with their own fair complexions, they have merged with the moonlight, an image that became common in verses describing *abhisārikā* women but that occurs early on in other settings as well.[72] And they have also given us another meta-poetic reference of luminous clarity in *avibhāvyatāṃ gatāḥ*, "they have become undetectable," for this applies not only to the women but also to the normative break points in the meter, which can likewise no longer be perceived.

The achievement is similar in the fourth line: *priya-vasatiṃ vrajanti sukham eva nirasta-bhiyo 'bhisārikāḥ*, "the sneaking women, their fear dispelled, move along quite easily to lovers' homes for trysting." Here the expected break would fall right in the middle of the enclitic particle *eva*. On the metapoetic level, it is not only the women who now can "move along quite easily"; the same is true of these flowing lines, which move quickly along unencumbered by the rules for word breaks, in a way now devoid of fear. After all, Bāṇa is bold.

The third of Bāṇa's verses describes the completion of the moonlight's spreading through the sky, with attention to the various white things on which it is reflected:

Verse 18. On the moonlight that has spread:[73]

viyati visarpatîva kumudeṣu bahūbhavatîva yoṣitāṃ (12)
pratiphalatîva ***jaṭha****ra-śara-kāṇḍa-vipāṇḍuṣu gaṇḍa-bhittiṣu* / (12)
am*bhasi* ***vika****satîva hasatîva sudhā-dhavaleṣu dhāmasu* (12)
dhvaja-paṭa-pallaveṣu lalatîva samīra-caleṣu candrikā // (12)

In the sky the moonlight seems
to spread itself; in the waterlilies
to multiply; on the womens'
high cheeks, gleaming white
as a chunk of ripe cane, to be reflected;
on the water to blossom; to laugh
on the whitewashed houses;
on the banners of flags to frolic
as they flutter in the breeze.

Although this verse does occur in the section on moonlight in the anthology, it is not attributed to Bāṇa or to anyone else. Nevertheless I am confident that it

72. An example is Bhāmaha's illustration of the figure *atiśayokti* in *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 2.81–83.
73. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 942 (in "The Moon" section), anonymous (Bāṇa).

is another one of Bāṇa's verses, not just because it is similar in topic and techniques to the other two verses and shares with them—and with them only—the peculiar metrical pattern we have seen, but also because it is quoted immediately after the first of Bāṇa's three verses in Rājaśekhara's treatment of the varieties of borrowing from earlier poets.

This type, he explains, involves not the collection of images from several separate verses but the reworking of several images found in a single earlier verse, a category that he calls the "blossoming of jasmine" (*kanda*),[74] as when an entire spray of blossoms opens simultaneously on a spring of jasmine. He quotes a verse that supplies, somewhat pedestrianly, three of the verbs used here by Bāṇa, to which Bāṇa has added a further three.

Again Rājaśekhara has not described for us the focus of Bāṇa's reworking of the material, but I take it to be an emphasis on the continuous quality of the spreading of the moonlight, an idea that Bāṇa expresses in several ways. These include a change in the poetic figure used—from hyperbolic identification (*atiśayokti*) to poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*), where the emphasis is on changes of identity still in progress rather than completed—as well as some of the metrical devices we have already seen. Here the technique of rolling right past the expected break after the eleventh syllable is used in every line, in conformity with the ubiquitous spread of moonlight being described. We thus see a gradual progression through the three verses in the extent to which the normative word-break pattern is followed or left behind, from a verse in which the norm is adhered to in the first three quarters and then played against in the fourth, to one in which the norm is again restated in the opening quarter only to be defied in the remaining three, to one in which the normative break is no longer used at all.

If we start with the first line of this third verse and read up to the expected break, we have *viyati visarpatīva kumude*: "In the sky it seems to be spreading; in the waterlily ...," and we expect what comes next to go with the waterlily, but what we get is a surprise—there is one more syllable left to go in the word, which turns out to be a plural locative, *kumudeṣu*, "in the waterlilies," a discovery immediately ratified by the next item, *bahu*, "many." And we cannot really pause after the short vowel at the end of *kumudeṣu*, nor even after the long vowel at the end of *bahū*, since this is a *cvi*-formation serving as a preverb which cannot be separated from the verb that follows.

At this point there is yet another surprise, since there is one more word left in the line, *yoṣitām*, which cannot go with anything that precedes—our first example in these verses of a single-word leftover at the end of a line, a phenomenon which forces us to continue on, all the way to the end of the next line to find

74. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 13.

the noun it goes with, *gaṇḍa-bhittiṣu*, the "cheek walls," that is, the high cheeks of the women, which are white as chunks of ripened sugarcane, and on which the moonlight seems to be reflected, literally "to bear counterfruit."

The fact that the moonlight continues to spread more and more is emphasized by the constantly enlarging length of clauses here, from *viyati visarpatîva* to *kumudeṣu bahūbhavatîva* to *yoṣitāṃ pratiphalatîva jaṭhara-śara-kāṇḍa-vipāṇḍasu gaṇḍa-bhittiṣu*. And the idea of unbroken spreading is also strengthened by such devices as the use of light-syllable substitutions and rhyming verbs.

Finally, before leaving this sequence of verses it is tempting to note, retrospectively, the appropriateness of the verbs used in this last verse to the subsequent history of Bāṇa's own innovations, as if they were more of the metapoetic references Bāṇa seems to have enjoyed in the course of making those innovations. For us each of the verbs used here may refer to the perceived effect not only of the moonlight that Bāṇa has described, but also of Bāṇa's own words. Both Bāṇa's moonlight and Bāṇa's poetic devices have spread; in their special beautiful ways they have multiplied; they have been fruitful in response (*pratiphalati*); in short, they have blossomed, in their influence on the later poets who looked to Bāṇa as a model of bold innovation.

C. Verse Sequence: The Poor Traveler in Winter[75]

Some of the other anthology verses attributed to Bāṇa describe travelers during specific seasons, and among these the verses dealing with a given season share a common meter, suggesting once again the possibility that they may have originally belonged together, although we have no way of knowing whether that might have been in a stage play, a long poem dealing with the seasons, or some other kind of thematic anthology. One example is the triad of verses attributed to Bāṇa in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and involving travelers in summer, all of which are in the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter.[76] On that group of verses I will note only that, just as with the three verses on moonlight discussed earlier, while two of the three verses are placed in the section that is relevant in natural terms, in this case the one on the summer season, one is placed elsewhere because a woman is

75. This section is based in part on two oral presentations: "Bāṇa's Boldness: A Tradition of Innovation in Sanskrit Poetic Practice," Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin at Madison, October 2008; and "In the Face of a Chilling Wind: Poverty in the Early Sanskrit Anthologies," Plenary Session of the 220th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Saint Louis, 14 March 2010.

76. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 194, 204, and 514.

involved. The verse therefore appears in the section on "The Blossoming of Love" (*anurāgavrajyā*), illustrating once again the tendency for realistic description to be trumped by the standard emotional categories in the interest of Sanskrit readers and critics, a topic to which I shall return shortly.

A more interesting triad is that of three verses describing a traveler in winter, each of them composed in the longer *sragdharā* meter. Of the three verses, two appear together in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*.[77] The third does not actually appear in that collection, but is preserved in at least three other old anthologies, in each of which the second of the two verses found in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* also appears. The three verses quite clearly belong together; I present them here in the order of the temporal sequence that is made explicit in the verses themselves, which describe a single impoverished winter traveler at nightfall (*pradoṣe*), at midnight (*niśīthe*), and at daybreak (*prātar*):

Verse 19. The traveler at nightfall:[78]

puṇyâgnau pūrṇa-vāñchaḥ prathamam agaṇita-ploṣa-doṣaḥ pradoṣe
pānthas taptvā prasuptas tad-anu tanu-tṛṇe dhāmani grāma-devyāḥ /
utkampī karpaṭârdhe jarati parijaḍe chidriṇi cchinna-nidro
vāte vāti prakāmaṃ hima-kaṇini kaṇan koṇataḥ koṇam eti //

At nightfall the traveler first heats himself
as long as he wishes at the village fire,
ignoring its scorching, and then goes to sleep
on a thin spread of straw in the village shrine.
He wakes trembling in the frigid tatters
of what remain of his worn-out rags,
and in a strong wind blowing full of sleet
he goes moaning from corner to corner.

Verse 20. The traveler at midnight:[79]

saṃviṣṭo grāma-devyāḥ kaṭa-ghaṭita-kuṭī-kuḍya-koṇâikadeśe
śīte saṃvāti vāyau hima-kaṇini kaṇad-danta-paṅkti-dvayâgraḥ /
pānthaḥ kanthāṃ niśīthe parikuthita-jarat-tantu-santāna-gurvīṃ
grīvâpādâgra-jānu-grahaṇa-caṭacaṭat-karpaṭāṃ prāvṛṇoti //

77. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1304 and 1305.

78. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1305, also in *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1344, *Sūktimuktāvali* 64.12, and *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* 3946 (attributed to Bāṇa in all four anthologies), and anonymously in *Subhāṣitāvali* 1857.

79. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1346 (attributed to Bāṇa), *Sūktimuktāvali* 64.13 (attributed to Bāṇa), and *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* 3947 (attributed to Mayūra).

In the middle of the night, at a spot in a corner
of the hut of straw that serves as village shrine,
the traveler settles in, with chattering teeth,
while the cold wind with its sleet keeps blowing.
His stinking patchwork robe is worn and stiff;
its tattered fabric rips a little more
each time he tries to stretch it
across his neck, or toes, or drawn-up knees.

Verse 21. The traveler at daybreak:[80]

prātar bāṣpâmbu-bindu-vyatikara-vigalat-klinna-ṣṛkkaḥ kathaṃcit
kiṃcit saṃkubja-jaṅghā-janita-jaḍa-javo jīrṇa-jānur jarârtaḥ /
muṣṭyâvaṣṭabhya yaṣṭiṃ kaṭi-puṭa-vicaṭat-karpaṭaḥ pluṣṭa-kanthaḥ
kunthann utthāya pānthaḥ pathi paruṣa-marun-mūrchyamānaḥ prayāti //

The corners of his mouth are wet with the mingled flow
of tears and precipitation, his body racked by age
and his knees worn out, but somehow the traveler manages
numbly to set his crooked shanks in motion.
He takes the staff in his fist and painfully gets up,
his ragged garment ripping at the cleft of his buttocks,
his patchwork robe scorched by the fire, and, unsteady
in the cruel wind, sets out along the road at dawn.

This series of verses contains ample evidence of each of the types of boldness we have been considering. The first of these to become apparent is the boldness in the choice of subject matter, which is clearly announced in the very first word in the first verse of the sequence, *puṇyāgnau*, "at the charity fire." This term (literally meaning "the fire of merit," that is, of philanthropy) is recorded, so far as I know, only in this verse by Bāṇa and in another by Yogeśvara, foremost among the Pāla poets who imitated Bāṇa in choosing to compose realistic descriptions of everyday village life; it refers, as Ingalls explains in a note on Yogeśvara's verse, to "the public fire kept burning in a village square for the use of travelers and the poor."[81]

The significance of the word lies not merely in the fact that this item in particular is not commonly mentioned in Sanskrit poetry, as was the case with the hanging *chowrie* in verse 1 or the diabolo in verse 14. Beginning the verse with a reference to the village charity fire emphasizes at the outset something of much

80. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1304 (attributed to Bāṇa).

81. Ingalls 1965, 493, n. on vs. 315; his explanation draws on the note on Bāṇa's verse in Peterson 1961, 58, n. on vs. 1857.

wider significance, which is that the verse will flout the convention by which the real-life details of life in the villages, especially the life of poor people, was simply not a normal topic of Sanskrit poetry. The aristocratic characters who were the focus of collections such as the *Amaruśataka*, while they might possibly have contributed to the funding of such a fire, would certainly not be found huddling around it at night; they had more comfortable ways of spending their evenings.

By extension, the description of low-class or impoverished persons, by virtue of their irrelevance to the preoccupation of Sanskrit *kāvya* poetry with ideal types to which they did not conform, fits only quite awkwardly within the very influential system of poetic aesthetics based on the concept of *rasa*, involving the evocation of moods based on a somewhat restricted list of standard emotions important in the typical lives of the ideal characters envisioned in this type of poetry. As Pollock has explained, "*rasa* is a way of speaking about the literary promulgation of an ideal-typical social order"[82]

Within this system of poetic emotion, unfortunate wretches, such as the traveler described here can play a role only as minor objects of an emotion of pity, and according to the textual prescriptions on predominant *rasa*s cannot serve as the primary focus of a poem. On the scale of a larger work, such as a stage play or other extended poems, this limitation is reflected in the requirement that the work must end on a happy note, in which the envisioned social priorities emerge triumphant; in reference to anthology verses such as these, devoted to the description of poor people, Ingalls has noted that "This prohibition of tragedy is the one crippling restriction from which Sanskrit literature suffers and one may be thankful for those single verses of pity which to some extent compensate for the loss," going on to praise Bāṇa's verses on "the penniless traveler, shivering in the winter wind."[83]

The insistence nonetheless on using Sanskrit poetry to provide realistic descriptions of everyday life in the villages and farms, including the life of poor people, is a distinctive feature of the verse poetry not only of Bāṇa but also of the Pāla poets who were inspired by him.[84] Some evidence of the personal history of Bāṇa's involvement with this choice of subject, and of the theoretical disputes provoked by such a choice, is fortunately available in the survival of a short but important verse composed by Bāṇa's own teacher, a man with the unusual name of Bharścu.[85]

82. Pollock 2005, 29.

83. Ingalls 1965, 358, paragraph 3, in the introduction to the section on poverty.

84. This feature of the poems of Pāla poets was first fully described in Ingalls 1954, Ingalls 1965, 326–28.

85. Bāṇa salutes him in an opening verse in *Kādambarī* 4, on which the commentators Bhānucandra and Siddhacandra describe him as Bāṇa's guru. The name appears in various sources in many different forms, including Bharścu, Bhartsu, Bhatsu, Bhaścu, Bharvu, and Bharcu.

Verse 22: Bharścu on a traveler:[86]

āhūto 'pi sahāyair
emîty uktvā vimukta-nidro 'pi
gantu-manā api pathikaḥ
saṅkocaṃ nâiva śithilayati

Though his friends have called him,
though he says "I'm coming,"
and is no longer asleep,
and though he intends to go,
the traveler does not uncurl himself.

What is at stake here in terms of poetic theory becomes clear in the discussion of the verse in the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana and the *Locana* commentary on it by Abhinavagupta, the two works of central importance in promoting the idea of suggested *rasa* as the central goal of good Sanskrit poetry. The verse is adduced (at 1.13g) as an example of a type of the poetic ornament *viśeṣokti* in which an effect does not take place even though its cause is present, and in this instance the underlying reason why the man does not get out of bed is not expressed but only suggested. Ānandavardhana notes that in this instance the suggestion produces no particular beauty and is therefore not predominant. Abhinavagupta comments that Udbhaṭa, an early writer on poetics, had explained that the reason the man stayed in bed was simply that it was a cold morning. But he goes on to say that those who are experts in *rasa* prefer to supply a reason more in line with the sought-after focus on the suggestion of the standard emotions—the man is hoping that if goes back to sleep he will be able to see, if only in a dream, the beloved woman from whom he has been separated in his travel.

On this Ingalls remarks as follows:[87]

> The verse here quoted is found in the anthologies ... under descriptions of winter, which shows that they followed the interpretation which Abhinava ... ascribes to Udbhaṭa, viz., that the unexpressed reason for the result not to occur is the fact that the traveler was cold. Abhinava's *Locana* is the earliest of our preserved texts to mention a more romantic interpretation.

In fact the situation in the anthologies is slightly more complex, if we begin with the oldest of them, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (twelfth century), composed at a time

86. *Dhvanyāloka* 1.13g; also in *Sūktimuktāvali* 63.23 (attributed to Barcu), *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* 3932 (attributed to Bharvu), and *Subhāṣitāvali* 1838 (attributed to Bhaścu).

87. Ingalls et al. 1990, 147, n. 1 on 1.13g A.

and place in which the anthologist was fully familiar with the special interests of the Pāla poets and their immediate predecessors. This anthology places the verse squarely in the section on poor people (*dīnavrajyā*). In the later anthologies referred to by Ingalls, those closest to this in time—the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (thirteenth century), *Sūktimuktāvali* (thirteenth century), and *Śārṅgadhara-paddhati* (fourteenth century)—place the verse in sections with the compound title of winter travelers (*Śiśirapathika* or *Hemantapathika*, sections in which verses by Bāṇa are especially prominent), thus moving away from the initial emphasis on the poverty of the person being described towards a stance of viewing the verse more as a description of a season. It has been removed from direct relevance to human emotion and made part of the general background of natural description, a process completed by the time of the next important anthology, the *Subhāṣitāvali* of Vallabhadeva (fifteenth century), where the section in which the verse appears is called simply "Winter" (*Śiśira*), with no longer any mention of the traveler at all.

All of these placements agree, however, in the opinion that cold weather is involved. The correctness of this view is supported by another early anthology verse in the winter sections that begins with exactly the same words as Bharścu's verse and is in the same meter, but that makes explicit both the fact that the man in bed is a lower-class farmhand (who in this case does get up and go to the field when called, but only reluctantly), and that what motivates his sluggishness is the oppressively cold weather.[88] The verse is important not only for showing the connection with winter but also for providing another clear example of a verse on a homely topic far removed from the usual concerns of Sanskrit poetry. In terms of the *rasa* theory promoted by Abhinavagupta, the farmhand does not fit into the socially narrow list of available emotional configurations, and so must be treated as an example of *jāti* or realistic description without direct significant emotional content, unless one were to imagine some romantic background story like the one offered by him for Bharścu's verse—a procedure all but ruled out here by the explicit specification of the character's inappropriate social status.

In Bāṇa's three verses on the winter traveler his social status is not directly stated aside from the clear evidence that is he old, feeble, and impoverished. He is apparently what in present-day terms we would call a homeless person. Quackenbos thought it possible, on the strength of the vocabulary used in reference to his clothing, that the man is more specifically a wandering ascetic.[89]

88. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1339: *āhūto hālikenâśrutam iva vacanaṃ tasya kṛtvā kṣaṇâikaṃ ... śītkārôtkampa-bhinnasphuṭad-adhara-paṭuḥ pāmaraḥ kṣetram eti* (anonymous).

89. Quackenbos 1917, 236, n. 2.

For our purposes it is enough to note that if he is an ascetic, the realistic and compassionate treatment of his condition is far removed from the idealized presentation of ascetic life in the outdoors found in collections such as the *Vairāgyaśataka* of Bhartṛhari, just as the natural description of real-life poverty on the village level differs from the political complaints about poverty made by the pandits and courtiers in Bhartṛhari's *Nītiśataka*.

In his notes on the verse describing the traveler at midnight, Quackenbos offered a further observation that brings us to the topic of verbal boldness in these verses. He was struck by the large number of words that occur both in this verse and in the one about the traveler at nightfall, and listed seven examples.[90] As an explanation for this remarkable situation, Quackenbos (who was writing a book primarily about the poetry of Mayūra) accepted the ascription in one anthology of the verse to Bāṇa's colleague Mayūra, and proposed that the two verses might have been entries from the two poets in a contest of the *samasyā* type, in which both are required to fill out a verse starting with the same given phrase. Presumably the phrase in this instance would have been *hima-kaṇini kaṇan*, although it is somewhat unusual to find the challenge phrase appearing in different places in the resulting verses.

In contrast, Ingalls (who was writing a book about the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* instead) accepted the ascription of both verses to Bāṇa, and noted as well that the two verses appear designed to describe two different points in time.[91] Some features of the repetitions involved seem to support this view rather that of the two verses having different authors, even beyond the strength of the agreement in all anthologies but one on assigning the midnight verse to Bāṇa. To begin with, a *samasyā* challenge might explain the sharing of one phrase but not of so many other words as well, occurring as they do in different places and arrangements, unless the poets were also given a list of separate vocabulary to use (which is not a part of the traditional contests), although it is possible that Bāṇa might have been arrogant enough to take a verse by Mayūra and rearrange the bulk of its words into a more effective poem.

The explicit temporal sequence in the verses also argues for a single author. It is hard to see why participants in a contest would use such similar labels for specific times but choose different times in doing so. More importantly, once the third verse in the sequence is included—which is labeled in precisely the same way but which was not considered by either Quackenbos or Ingalls—it becomes apparent that the reusing of words from one verse to another follows in no small part the same sequence. Only two words are used in all three verses (*pāntha* and *karpaṭa*), and the first and third verses share only one word beyond

90. Quackenbos 1917, 236–37, n. 3.

91. Ingalls 1965, 554, notes on vss. 1304 and 1305.

this (*jaḍa*), whereas the first and second verses share from ten to 12 words (depending upon which readings are taken), and the second and third verses share five or six.

If this massive level of borrowing from one verse to another was a deliberate procedure, it was one with no precedents that I know of, and no imitators either, and one which would in fact fly in the face of the well-known reluctance of the Sanskrit poets to repeat themselves within a small space. It is true that some of the greatest authors of Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s can be shown to repeat certain words from one verse to another (a practice strangely ignored in Sanskrit treatises on poetics),[92] but that is something done on a much smaller scale. Here it is as if Bāṇa were experimenting with a technique of using a slowly changing texture of massive repetition across a sequence of verses describing a slowly changing scene, one involving a single character. Such an experiment would be bold indeed.

On a less startling level of peculiarities in vocabulary we can be more confident that Bāṇa, together with his countrymen among the Pāla poets, was experimenting with new practices, and that is in the frequent use of words that are elsewhere recorded only in works on grammar. Ingalls notes in this connection the verb *kaṇ* in the verse on nightfall (a verb also used in the verse on midnight, which Ingalls does not discuss), and the verb *kunth* in the verse on daybreak. Given the fact that these words are found in actual use elsewhere only in the Pāla poets, it is possible that they reflect regional preferences in vocabulary connected with the local languages in Bengal and Bihar.[93]

Beyond this there is very obvious evidence of verbal boldness in the categories we have seen before, but here it is worth noting that both in the use of sound effects such as flamboyant phonemes and extensive alliteration and in the employment of long compounds, the density of such verbal features seems connected, just as the patterns of word repetition may be, with the temporal sequence involved in the verses.

In terms of consonant alliteration, which may be used as an expression of the growing discomfort of the traveler, things start slowly in the first verse, which relies more on the rhyming of vowels; the repeated *p*'s of the first half are spread out somewhat, and it is not until the final quarter that things have built to the level of five *k*'s in rapid succession. That level is continued in the opening of the second verse, one again with five *k*'s in the first line. But the highest intensity is not reached until the third verse, where after starting at basically the same level with five *b*'s (if we bear in mind the northeastern habit of pronouncing *v*'s like *b*'s) in the first line, but then jumping up to eight *j*'s in the second line and eight retroflex *ṭ*'s in the third.

92. The practice is examined in detail in Peterson 2003.

93. Ingalls 1965, 554, notes on vss. 1304 and 1305; the use of noticeable "Bengalisms" by the Pāla poets is discussed in Ingalls 1954.

In terms of compounding, there seems to be a tendency to use short words to express situations of motion across space and longer compounds to express repeated actions in a fixed place. Thus, the first verse uses its longest compound in describing the time that the traveler stayed motionless warming himself at the fire (the consequences of which are revisited in the mention of his scorched clothing in the last verse), but has short words in speaking of his moving about from corner to corner looking for a place to sleep. Once he has settled down, in the second verse, longer compounds come into play, describing the stationary hut, the continuing chattering of teeth, and most prominently—in two long compounds filling all of the fourth line and most of the third—his repeated action as he lies there through the night of trying to stretch his robe far enough to cover himself in the cold. In the third verse, the longer compounds describe the wetness on his face, his torturous attempt to bring himself into motion, and once again the ever-worsening ripping of his garment, but once he does begin to move the description of his heading out down the road is done with short words, except for the compound referring to the steady blowing of the wind.

More examples of similar techniques could easily be chronicled. Even among the anthology verses attributed to Bāṇa and dealing with descriptions of the seasons, for example, we have preserved for us, in addition to the verses in *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter describing summer, an additional verse on summer in the *sragdharā* meter, and similarly, in addition to the *sragdharā* verses on winter that we have just examined, there is also another verse on winter in the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter. And for all we know, these additional verses may be remnants of still further interesting sequences. But enough has been said to outline the most prominent techniques to be found in Bāṇa's approach to verse composition.

In all of these categories of boldness, both verbal and ideal, the anthology verses record features of Bāṇa's practice that can also be observed in the centuries that followed in the works of the Pāla poets and others working in and around the courts at Kannauj. In the chapter that follows, the major figures involved in those lines of influence will be traced, leading up to a focus on one particular Pāla poet whose compositions built on the example of Bāṇa in ways that were innovative in their own right.

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V

The Sons of Bāṇa

> Bhavabhūti rediscovered it
> long after Bāṇa walked it every day.
> Kamalāyudha frequented it,
> and Keśaṭa traveled on it, too.
> Then Śrī Vākpatirāja graced its dust with his feet.
> That this road is still open to someone with real talent
> is our great good fortune.

This verse, which we have quoted in the introduction, sets out a genealogy of Bāṇa's poetic path as it was seen in northeastern India some two centuries after his time. Ascribed in different sources to either of the two Pāla poets Abhinanda and Yogeśvara, the verse describes not only the adoption of the path by several of their contemporaries, but also the role of Bhavabhūti as the intermediary between Bāṇa and the later group of writers.

Sanskrit poets working under the patronage of the Pāla kings in the region of greater Bengal in the ninth and tenth centuries are, as a group, one of the most distinctive examples of conspicuous innovation, especially in their fondness for rustic and realistic descriptions. Their claim to be followers of Bāṇa can be supported by the many features of his own poetry that resonate with their practices, such as the choice of topics, the flair for natural description, and the bold use of the so-called Gauḍīya style, as Gary Tubb shows in the chapter on Abhinanda and the Pāla poets. But it is just as important to note their identification of the intervening history of that path, beginning with

Bhavabhūti, whose own peculiarities can often also be traced later in the intense emotionalism of Abhinanda.

Bhavabhūti's works provide us with our first occasion in this volume to focus on Sanskrit stage plays; three of the four chapters in this section—on Bhavabhūti, Rājaśekhara, and Murāri—deal with plays. In comparison with the plays of earlier authors such as Kālidāsa and Aśvaghoṣa, these works bear the marks of the post-Bāṇa style, with its more complex and daring effects, whether of language and emotion as in Bhavabhūti, of plot and structure as in Rājaśekhara, or of ideation and figuration as in Murāri, in whose hands the Sanskrit play is entirely transformed into something perhaps no longer performable.

Clearly these are individuals with distinct voices of their own. But, just as clearly, their creativity is associated with an ongoing context of artistic vitality and excitement, converging politically and geographically on the royal courts in Kanauj. There a number of other influential writers, including some such as Śrīvākpatirāja mentioned in the verse above, who experimented with the techniques developed by their predecessors and with new ways of transferring the possibilities of poetic effects across the borders of genres and even of languages. In general it is clear that a new image of the professional poet, constantly refining his talent and his individual voice in communication with his poetic colleagues, had crystallized. Indeed, we see it described in detail by one of the major participants in this group, Rājaśekhara, in his new and ambitious attempt to theorize the field of literature in his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*.

The *Bālarāmāyaṇa* play of the same Rājaśekhara is the topic of Lawrence McCrea's chapter in this section, in which he describes two special features of emphasis in the work: the focus on the character of Rāvaṇa rather than on Rāma, and the focus on the techniques of "spectation," that is, on the characters' reacting to the main events of the familiar story rather than enacting it. The emphasis on reaction and various devices of reflexivity are a hallmark of this period and hearken back to the Rāma plays of Bhavabhūti, discussed in the chapter by Gary Tubb, which describes the distinctive emotionialism of Bhavabhūti and its connections with his developing style as a dramatist. The emphasis on Rāvaṇa carries over into Murāri's play, the *Anargharāghava*, one of the most sustained and complex works to come out of the Kanauj milieu, as shown in David Shulman's chapter.

Thus, all of these works share much more than their choice of the story of Rāma as subject matter. Indeed, the very challenge of dealing with such a well-worked theme in fresh ways, as McCrea points out, is connected with the interest these poets share in stretching the boundaries both of the classical language and of its conventions of genre and theme. In short, taken together, this corpus of dazzling works should perhaps be seen as the high point of the cosmopolitan Sanskrit of the first millennium.

13

Something New in the Air

Abhinanda's Rāmacarita *and Its Ancestry*[*]

GARY TUBB

In the second half of the ninth century, around the time when Ratnākara in Kashmir was bringing the sophisticated *mahākavya* style associated with Māgha to even greater levels of complexity in his *Haravijaya*,[1] on the other side of India the Pāla poet Abhinanda was composing a new kind of poem. His *Rāmacarita*, like Ratnākara's work, meets the formal requirements of the *mahākāvya*—it is composed in syntactically independent verses arranged in *sarga*s with prevailing meters of the *kāvya* sort, deals with a martial theme, and describes the usual topoi along the way—and modern histories of Sanskrit poetry routinely dismiss it as yet another "*mahākāvya* of the elaborate kind"[2] or otherwise suggest that it is similar in style to the

* Portions of this chapter are based on a paper titled "Something in the Air: Abhinanda's *Rāmacarita*," presented in the closing conference of our workshop in Jerusalem in May 2004, and on a paper titled "Abhinanda's Rāmacarita and the Legacy of Bāṇa," presented at the 215th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Philadelphia, March 2005.

1. In my earlier chapter on Māgha, I describe his intensification of the more elaborate aspects of *mahākāvya* style, with a focus on his place in the history of *citrakāvya*—"flashy" or spectacular poetry, ranging from rhymes involving re-division of syllables (*yamaka*) to complicated arrangements of syllables such as palindromes and zigzag verses. I also refer briefly to the extension of this elaborating trend by the ninth-century poet, Ratnākara.

2. Dasgupta and De 1947, 324; cf. Bhattacharji 1993, 251: "an equally undistinguished ornate poem."

poems of Bhāravi or of Māgha, and that it belongs in the same category as the *Haravijaya*. Scholars who have actually looked at the *Rāmacarita*, however, know that despite its external format it is a very different sort of poem from Ratnākara's.

More than one careful reader has described the style of the *Rāmacarita* as a return to the relatively simple manner of Aśvaghoṣa, albeit with far greater smoothness.[3] There is some truth to this, but not enough, because the *Rāmacarita* is in fact something noticeably different from all earlier *mahākāvya*s. It has similarly been noted that the style of the poem corresponds to the gentle Vaidarbhī mode as described by Daṇḍin,[4] rather than the Gauḍī mode that one might expect from a Bengali such as Abhinanda. This becomes all the more mysterious when one learns that, as I shall explain, Abhinanda himself claimed as a model the same poet Bāṇa whose influence has been seen as leading to the extravagant complexity of Ratnākara. We shall also learn that in other settings Abhinanda showed himself quite capable of that more complex style, and we must therefore suppose that the radically different approach in the *Rāmacarita* was one he deliberately chose.

Why did he do so? What were his aims, and how, if at all, were they related to Bāṇa's example? In what follows I hope to describe some of the principles I feel may be at work in the composition of the *Rāmacarita*, and to show how they may be considered an outgrowth of tendencies that can be traced back through a clear line of poets influenced by Bāṇa and operating as a self-consciously identified tradition of composition in eastern India. That line, as we shall see, includes both the major poets who, like Bāṇa, worked under the patronage of successive dynasties ruling from Kannauj, and also the associated group of Pāla poets to which Abhinanda himself belonged. This latter group, so referred to because they worked in association with rulers of the Pāla lines in parts of Bengal and Bihar, has come to be known for a distinctively realistic style of poetry dealing with topics beyond the standard repertoire of Sanskrit court poetry, and these traits are another important part of Abhinanda's unusual approach to the *mahākāvya*.

Attention to the inter-twining of these two movements—the new techniques explored by the court poets in Kannauj, and the new sensitivities of the Pāla poets to the east—go much further in explaining Abhinanda's goals than reference to styles of the more distant past. His style is complicated in newer ways despite its apparent simplicity. In fact many of its features seem at first to reach back even further than Aśvaghoṣa, to the style of the old *Mahābhārata* epic. This is true, for example, of the unusually high ratio of speech to description in

3. Rāmaswāmi 1930, xxiv–xxv; Warder 5.125–26.

4. Rāmaswāmī 1930, xxiv–xxv.

his poem, which resembles the epic far more than it does any of the great *mahākāvyas*. Another example is his fondness for moving away from the usual syntactical independence of individual verses by linking long series of verses syntactically. His poem is said to use these *kulaka* passages more frequently than any other known *mahakāvya*,[5] and this too is reminiscent of the *Mahābhārata*, in which the verse of four quarters is often not the primary unit, and long run-on passages are common. The true model for this approach, however, is more likely Abhinanda's attention to the techniques used in the prose poetry of Bāṇa and in the continuous narrative of the court poetry composed in Prakrit by some of Bāṇa's admirers, as well as his interest in the borrowing of techniques from one genre into another that the poets in Kannauj had begun to experiment with.

In matters of diction Abhinanda often seems to reach even further back, using linguistic forms seldom attested since Vedic times. But in this as well he can be shown to have looked not to Vedic texts as his model, but to the groundbreaking work of poets in the Kannauj line such as Bhavabhūti, who strove to stretch the boundaries of the classical Sanskrit language. Where Abhinanda differs from Bhavabhūti is in his insistence on using only language that is easily understandable, and his talent in this direction has helped to disguise the true sources of his inspiration.

It can be said more generally of Abhinanda's approach to the *mahākāvya* that he insists on maintaining a consistent texture of accessibility while delivering within it as much expressiveness as possible, with the result that his work is both smoother and far more complex poetically than the old epics or the poetry of Aśvaghoṣa, but without being significantly more difficult to comprehend. Even in the matter of *citrakāvya*, the feature of the developed *mahākāvya* most distant from comprehensibility, he characteristically finds a place for this traditional device, but refuses to compromise the texture of his poem by its use. In his canto on the full battle scene he shows his awareness that this is where *citrabandha* verses are expected, by providing a single example of a verse of the zigzag (*gomūtrikā*) type[6]—where Māgha had provided an entire canto full of such things—and unlike any of Māgha's verses in this category Abhinanda's verse is simple to understand. Similarly, Abhinanda often uses long rhymes of the *yamaka* type but never lets them extend to the full length of a verse-quarter, while Māgha, as we have seen, filled a canto with even longer *yamakas*.

Ironically, Abhinanda's success in achieving accessibility has made his poem one of the least accessible of important *mahākāvyas* in our times, when many readers are reluctant to take up a Sanskrit poem for which no running

5. Vatsyayan 1987, 93–94.

6. *Rāmacarita* 19.5, explained in Vatsyayan 1997, 85.

commentaries exist. The *Rāmacarita* has never stood in enough need of panditical explanation to make it an attractive choice for inclusion in the school curriculum or for the published glosses that such inclusion provokes. As a result the attention given to the poem by modern scholars lags far behind that paid to it in medieval Sanskrit texts on poetics and by later Sanskrit poets, some of whom have included Abhinanda in their own short lists of the two or three greatest Sanskrit poets. Yet the *Rāmacarita* remains uniquely important as the single extant example of an attempt by a major participant in two of the most innovative movements in the history of Sanskrit literature to apply the new approaches of those movements to the most prestigious and conservative genre of high Sanskrit poetry.

And the nature of those innovations make Abhinanda's work significant beyond the genre of the *mahākāvya* as well, since they involve a complex of questions of central importance in our understanding of Sanskrit culture, including problems of the boundaries involved in the choice of languages and in the restrictions placed on the social content of Sanskrit poetry. These concerns are prominent in recent considerations of what has come to be called "regional Sanskrit," and there is some justification in regarding Abhinanda as the earliest influential practitioner of distinctively regional Sanskrit whose work has survived.

A. Poetic Pedigrees

A.1. Abhinanda and the Pāla Poets

The question of which earlier poets might have served as models for the *Rāmacarita* is one on which we are given a valuable headstart in remarks made by poets within the Sanskrit tradition closer in time to the poem, including Abhinanda himself, who are unanimous in describing him as a master of a new style of poetry introduced by Bāṇa in the early seventh century, and carried on thereafter most importantly by poets who, like Bāṇa, found patronage in the courts in Kannauj.

Our richest source of such remarks is the set of isolated verses on poets preserved in the earliest surviving anthologies of Sanskrit poetry, especially Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and Śrīdharadāsa's *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. These provide lists in which the names of court poets of Kannauj are inter-twined with those of Pāla poets, for whose work these same anthologies are again the most extensive repositories. It was in fact through the publication of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*[7] and its translation[8] by Daniel Ingalls that the special features of the Pāla became well known to modern readers.

7. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957.
8. Ingalls 1965.

In a preliminary article on Pāla poets,[9] Ingalls listed as the main members of that group Yogeśvara, Abhinanda, Śatānanda, and Vāgura, all of whom he identified as Bengalis. This happens to be the same group brought together in *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1699, a verse in which Abhinanda mentions his father Śatānanda's unique choice of subject, Vāgura's travelling of the path of previous great poets, and Yogeśvara's sensuous treatment (perhaps in a messenger poem) of rural topics. Ingalls was probably correct in inferring that Abhinanda knew Yogeśvara personally, but for Vāgura we have no further information beyond some verses of his in the anthology.

Ingalls added to this list Vākpatirāja, whom he detected using a "pronounced Bengalism." The addition of Vākpatirāja is interesting in opening up a connection to the court of Yaśovarman in Kannauj, in which that poet is usually thought to have worked, a connection that is supported by some of the surviving comments of the Pāla poets on the earlier poets whom they admired.

The most useful of these verses is *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1733, attributed to Yogeśvara by Vidyākara, but to his compatriot Abhinanda by Śrīdharadāsa:[10]

> Bhavabhūti rediscovered it
> long after Bāṇa walked it every day.
> Kamalāyudha frequented it,
> and Keśaṭa traveled on it, too.
> Then Śrī Vākpatirāja graced its dust with his feet.
> That this road is still open to someone with real talent
> is our great good fortune.

Here there are three additions to the sequence, which appears to be in chronological order: Bhavabhūti, who appears from the testimony of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* to have been Vākpatirāja's senior colleague in Yaśovarman's court; Kamalāyudha, who was Vākpatirāja's teacher; and Keśaṭa, who from this verse is perhaps to be placed in the same group. The dates of these poets are approximately:[11]

1. Bāṇa (first half 7th cent., under Harṣa in Kannauj)
2. Bhavabhūti (early 8th cent., under Yaśovarman in Kannauj)

9. Ingalls 1954, 121.
10. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1733:

> *unnīto bhavabhūtinā prati-dinaṃ bāṇe gate yaḥ purā*
> *yaś cīrṇaḥ kamalāyudhena su-ciraṃ yenâgamat keśaṭaḥ /*
> *yaḥ śrī-vākpatirāja-pāda-rajasāṃ saṃparka-pūtaś ciraṃ*
> *diṣṭyā ślāghya-guṇasya kasyacid asau mārgaḥ samunmīlati //*

The translation is by Bronner, Shulman, and Tubb in the Introduction to this volume.
11. Cf. Ingalls 1954, 121, who used Kosambi's dates.

3. Kamalāyudha (end of 7th century, under Yaśovarman in Kannauj)
4. Keśaṭa (in same circle in Kannauj?)
5. Śrī-Vākpatirāja (early 8th century, under Yaśovarman in Kannauj)
6. Yogeśvara (ca. 850–900, apparently in the Pāla kingdoms)

Abhinanda himself extends this circle of poets in the very personal tribute, preserved in *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1714, which he addressed to Rājaśekhara, a poet who would have been younger than Abhinanda and whom he probably met, judging from the verse, late in his own life.[12] Significantly, Rājaśekhara was yet another poet who spent time in the court at Kannauj.

The involvement of Pāla poets with the courts of Kannauj is, not surprisingly, a reflection of a fairly long history of political connections. The Pāla dynasty began with Gopāla (r. 750–70), Dharmapāla (r. 770–810), and Devapāla (r. 810–50), the first (or first two) of whom was elected to the post out of humble beginnings, and this might have been one reason for their interest in establishing a reputation as patrons of Sanskrit poetry. In the time of Abhinanda and Yogeśvara there must still have been close ties with Kannauj, which during Dharmapāla's reign had been ruled by his own nominee, but which had since fallen under the control of the Pratīhāras from the west; Rājaśekhara was there not during its control by the Pālas but during the reigns of the Pratīhāra kings confusingly named Mahendrapāla and Mahīpāla.[13] The connection of the eastern poets with the courts of Kannauj was an old one, for while Bhavabhūti was probably from Maharashtra, Bāṇa was from Bihar, and Vākpatirāja must also have been from Bengal or Bihar. The importance of Kannauj as a location for the work of major Sanskrit poets was also one that would continue through a series of further authors demonstrably influenced by the legacy of Bāṇa, including Trivikramabhaṭṭa, the author of the oldest surviving *campū* in Sanskrit, and ending with Śrīharṣa, author of the *Naiṣadhīya mahākāvya*.

A.2. Soḍḍhala's Lists

The basics of Abhinanda's list are confirmed in the chronological list of poets (*vaṃśaḥ kavīnāṃ*) offered later, and on the other side of India, by Soḍḍhala, the Gujarati author of the *Udayasundarī Kathā*,[14] a Sanskrit *campū* composed in the early eleventh century under the patronage of a king in the Konkan. Soḍḍhala names

12. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lxx.
13. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xciv.
14. Rāmaswāmī 1930, xxi n. 1.

five earlier poets down through Kālidāsa, and then five major figures from the list we have already seen, ending with Rājaśekhara:

1. Vālmīki
2. Vyāsa
3. Guṇāḍhya
4. Bhartṛmeṇṭha
5. Kālidāsa
6. Bāṇa
7. Bhavabhūti
8. Vākpatirāja
9. Abhinanda
10. Rājaśekhara

For the line of greatest poets after Kālidāsa, Soḍḍhala thus agrees with Abhinanda (if Abhinanda may be permitted to include himself) on the five names in the list from Bāna through Rājaśekhara.

Soḍḍhala also brings several of these poets together in a verse listing them not in chronological order but in the order of the areas of their mastery:[15]

I worship Abhinanda as master of speech,
I worship Vākpatirāja as master of meaning,
and I praise Kālidāsa as master of mood,
but I bow down to Bāṇa as master of all.

The list of important poets running from Bāṇa through Abhinanda is thus fairly well established. What is more difficult to determine is the precise nature of the poetic practices handed down in this lineage. Here we have some help from the later Pāla poet Vasukalpa, who in a verse preserved by Śrīdharadāsa (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 5.26.3)[16] lists Bāṇa, Keśaṭa, Yogeśvara, and Rājaśekhara (again apparently in chronological order) as having preceding him in relying on boldness in speech (*vacasi prāgalbhyam*) as the enlivening feature of their poetry.

In his study of the *Haravijaya* of Ratnākara—a poet who, as I have mentioned, lived at the same time as Abhinanda but who was located in Kashmir—Smith points out that Ratnākara also viewed Bāṇa as "the founder of a

15. Text quoted in Rāmaswāmī 1930, ix n. 2:

vāg-īśvaraṃ hanta bhaje 'bhinandam
arthêśvaraṃ vākpatirājam īḍe /
rasêśvaraṃ staumi ca kālidāsaṃ
bāṇaṃ tu sarvêśvaram ānato 'smi //

16. Cited in Warder 4 § 2457.

new movement,"[17] and that the essence of this movement was the use of language that is "gentle yet bold" (*mandâbhipragalbha*),[18] although Smith admits that Ratnākara himself differs from Abhinanda in that Abhinanda and the other poets mentioned "share with Bāṇa an ability which Ratnākara cannot be said to enjoy, namely graphically realistic description of nature," although he does share with them "the possession of a bold grandeur of vision."

I believe Smith is basically correct in all of this. Even an examination of the verses of the poets mentioned that happen to be preserved in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* will show that they often demonstrate a boldness in language represented by a willingness to use long compounds where appropriate, as well as a fairly dramatic range of alliteration, together with a boldness of concept seen both in the use of unusual subjects of description that Smith finds lacking in Ratnākara and in the "grandeur of vision" that he praises.

Some of these features are the same characteristics which in their more extreme forms are castigated by the writers on poetics under the heading of the Gauḍīya style, and it is not surprising to find them being used by our poets from Bihar and Bengal. In the more nuanced use of those practiced by our poets they receive more favorable treatment by Kuntaka in his *Vakroktijīvita*,[19] where he describes the style of Bāṇa and others under the heading of the *vicitra mārga* or "striking path," contrasting it with the earlier *sukumāra mārga* or "tender path" of Kālidāsa and Sarvasena, and thus noting a turning point in the history of *kāvya*.

Unfortunately, as Raghavan has pointed out, Kuntaka's distinction between the two paths is virtually useless as described in his theoretical statements. To recognize Bāṇa's path we must look to the verses themselves, bearing in mind that like much of what is best in Sanskrit *kāvya* the essentials of these practices can already be found, in a subtler form, in Kālidāsa, and that insofar as they correspond to the features known as Gauḍī some of these elements may be used by poets of many different kinds when turning to the composition of certain categories of Sanskrit poetry such as inscriptional panegyrics.

A.3. Questions Raised

Our list of poets raises a couple of obvious questions: First, how did these authors serve as models for the composition of the *Rāmacarita*, when none of them is known to have composed a Sanskrit *mahākāvya*? Bāna is known for his prose works, Bhavabhūti for his stage plays, and Vākpatirāja for a long Prakrit poem

17. Smith 1985, 107–08.
18. Smith 1985, 105.
19. Miśra 1990, 49ff.; Warder 1.114 ff.; Raghavan 1978, 335f.

that in its structure is more like Bāṇa's prose works than like the *mahākāvya*s of Abhinanda's predecessors. Second, even on the level of individual verses, what connection is there between the elaborate style of Bāṇa with that of the *Rāmacarita*, which, as I have mentioned, is so surprisingly simple as to suggest a return to the techniques of the earliest *mahākāvya* poets? As David Smith and others have explained, there is clear agreement within the tradition on the essential feature of Bāṇa's path, which is repeatedly characterized as being marked by *prāgalbhya*, or boldness. If this boldness is to be found primarily in the striking sound effects and long compounds of the so-called Gauḍī style of Sanskrit, which is legitimately associated with Bāṇa, the *Rāmacarita* is not a good place to look for it.

There is no doubt that Abhinanda thinks of Bāṇa primarily as an author of prose poetry, for he specifically mentions this as Bāṇa's specialty,[20] and he may well have drawn lessons for his own verse from Bāṇa's treatment of prose. I suspect, for example, that Bāṇa's prose works inspired some of Abhinanda's choices of descriptive subjects. And we know of other instances in which prose *kāvya*s have served as models for authors of other genres; Yigal Bronner has described how techniques used in bi-textual *mahākāvya*s were first developed in the "prose laboratories" of Subandhu and Bāṇa.[21]

The topic of transfers of technique and approach from one genre to another is one that deserves careful treatment with reference to the entire line of major poets in Kannauj—Bāṇa, Harṣa, Bhavabhūti, Kamalāyudha, Vākpatirāja, Rājaśekhara, Trivikrama, and Śrīharṣa—who together account for an impressive number of innovations that may be the result of such experiences. Bhavabhūti mentions the topic at the close of his *Uttararāmacarita*, and I am convinced that his plays were the source not only of some of Abhinanda's innovations in *rasa* presentation but also of specific details in his treatment of the characters of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

But a detailed examination of cross-genre influences lies beyond the scope of this essay. Here I will simply point out instead that, in addition to his prose, Bāṇa was also the author of some of the most effective and skillful examples we have of Sanskrit verse, preserved in the anthologies, in the verses embedded in his prose works, and—if the collection is indeed by him—in the century of verses on the goddess Durgā entitled *Caṇḍīśataka*. The features of these verses most relevant to the question of Abhinanda's poetic practices are discussed below.

A further question raised by the verses on poets is that of what Soḍḍhala meant in referring to Abhinanda as the master of words while calling Vākpatirāja

20. "*gadya-kavaye bāṇāya*," verse added before *sarga* 33 (p. 296).

21. Bronner 1999, 69ff.

the master of meaning. Warder's contention that the distinction rests on whether or not the plot of the poem in question is borrowed from an earlier work[22]—Abhinanda drew his plot from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but Vākpatirāja and Bāṇa composed original stories—is too simple. We have seen that Bhāravi is the poet most often praised as master of meaning (*artha*), and that in his case this refers to the density of the ideal (as opposed to emotional) content of a poem, and not to the origin of his plot, which is drawn from the *Mahābhārata*.[23]

It seems more likely that what Soḍḍhala had in mind was Abhinanda's impressive talents in the realm of diction, which will be touched on shortly.

B. Anthology Verses

B.1. The Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa

For the Pāla poets especially, we are fortunate in having a collection of Sanskrit poetry assembled in their home country, Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, which is important for the study of innovations and turning points in Sanskrit *kāvya* for at least four reasons.

First, it is the oldest of the surviving general anthologies of Sanskrit verse. Its compiler Vidyākara, a Buddhist scholar at the Jaggadala monastery located at a place now just inside the Indian portion of East Bengal, made two versions of the collection, one around 1100 CE and the second about 20 years later.[24]

Second, Vidyākara was careful in his ascriptions of verses to individual poets, and together with his relatively early date this means that we can learn a great deal from him that we could otherwise not know. We see, for example, how wide-ranging the poetry of well-known figures such as Bāṇa, Harṣavardhana, and Dharmakīrti was beyond the works of theirs that have survived, and in particular how extensive the contribution of known poets such as these was to thematic anthologies traditionally ascribed to single authors. And for poets who have not been well known before, we are given some information that enables us to consider the history of their styles.

Third, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* preserves for us a large window into the world of Buddhist poetic sensibilities in India, an opportunity that became ever more rare as the vitality of Buddhism in India declined and the rich corpus of Buddhist texts ceased to be re-copied. That Vidyākara's anthology survived from among

22. Warder 5.125.

23. The topic of Bhāravi and *artha* has been discussed in an earlier chapter by Peter Khoroche on Bhāravi and in my chapter on Māgha in this volume.

24. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xxxi ff.

this corpus is the result of an accident which had an impact on the history of other important works as well: they were among the shelf of books swept up by the Kashmiri scholar Sakyaśrī when he fled from the looting of the Jagaddala monastery in 1204, and carried by him to Tibet.[25]

Fourth, as we have seen, the anthology has also made available to us at least some portion of the work of an entire group of inter-related poets, those patronized by the Pāla kings of Bihar and parts of Bengal, and has made it clear that among their techniques was a style of poetry focussing on the realia of village life in a way not often seen in other Sanskrit poets. This group has been described by Ingalls in an article[26] and in his introduction to the translation of Section 35 of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*.

If the works of these Pāla poets had been confined to Vidyākara's collection, our knowledge of their poetry would remain an interesting sidelight in our study of the history of Sanskrit *kāvya*. But at least one of them was also the author of a long *mahākāvya*—a poem that was widely admired by later poets and critics and that is unusual enough in its contents and techniques to qualify as a notable innovation. In attempting to trace the connections of that innovation to the legacy of Bāṇa, the evidence that the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* has to offer on inter-relations among the Pāla poets is of crucial importance.

B.2. Bāṇa's Poetry and the "Sons of Bāṇa"

In beginning to answer the questions surrounding these relationships we must first acknowledge how little we know about the full extent of the poetic activity both of Bāṇa and of the Pāla poets who looked to him as a model. Our main source for the verses of the Pāla poets, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* anthology, also gives us a glimpse into the range of poetry that Bāṇa must have been known for beyond his prose works and his *śataka*. It is already well known that the anthology identifies some of the best verses in the *Amaruśataka* and other collections as the work of Bāṇa. I think it also preserves traces of larger works by Bāṇa, as I have argued earlier in this volume.[27]

What is perhaps most obvious about verses in the anthology attributed to Pāla poets is that they illustrate something already singled out by Ingalls as a distinctive feature of Bāṇa's poetry, namely the strikingly realistic description of ordinary things in an emotionally powerful way, and also pointed to by him

25. See Chapter 20 in this volume, especially pp. 593–95.

26. Ingalls 1954.

27. Bāṇa's verse poetry is discussed earlier in Chapter 3, "On the Boldness of Bāṇa."

separately as the single most obviously distinctive feature of the verses composed by the Pāla poets anthologies such as Abhinanda. The verses also preserve, however, a line of influence in other matters as well, and a careful study of their techniques, especially in connection with the forms of innovation and boldness associated with Bāṇa, remains to be done. In the space available here I must focus on a single representative of the Pāla line of poets.

B.3. Abhinanda in the Anthologies

For Abhinanda's poetic corpus beyond the *Rāmacarita*, our most reliable sources are, once again, the anthologies. The question of how many works by our poet Abhinanda may still be available is complicated by the fact that there seem to have been two Abhinandas living at the same time, both eligible to be called Gauḍa Abhinanda, and both candidates for recognition as author of several works.

Our poet, the author of the *Rāmacarita*, identifies himself as the son of Śatānanda and appears to be from the Pāla lands, not only because of the patronage of his poem but also because of the linguistic and poetic features of the verses by both Abhinanda and Śatānanda included in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*. The other Abhinanda, author of the *Kādambarīsāra*, identifies himself as the son of Jayanta (presumably the logician by that name), and was born in Kashmir, but in a family that had earlier come from the Gauḍa region.

It is unclear which (if either) Abhinanda was the author of the well-known *Yogavāsiṣṭhasāra* or *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha*, an abridgement of the famous text of idealist philosophical stories. In itself the word *sāra* in the title would point to the Kashmiri Abhinanda because of the similar title of his abridgement of the *Kādambarī*. But the hymn to Rāma in *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* 6.17.11–58 occurs also in almost exactly the same form in the speech of Vibhīṣaṇa to Sugrīva at *Rāmacarita* 31.99–148, and was most probably extracted from there; although the same hymn exists in the larger *Bṛhat Yogavāsiṣṭha* (at 6.12710–57), of which the *Laghu* text is supposedly an abridgement, there are other places where the larger text has clearly drawn on the shorter one, and the passage seems at home in the *Rāmacarita*, where it may be compared to the similar passage in *Rāmacarita* 9.8–66. But there is no reason why the other Abhinanda might not have been familiar with the *Rāmacarita*, and, to confuse matters further, it is also possible that our Abhinanda might, like many others before, have moved from Gauḍa to Kashmir himself at some point in his life, since he appears to have gone from place to place after the death of his original patron.[28] Although the question is

28. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lxviii–lxx. For more on Abhinanda's patron see the later explanation in this chapter.

of considerable interest given the obvious overlap in subject matter between the two texts on Rāma, the authorship of the *Laghu Yogavāsiṣṭha* remains uncertain.[29]

The name Abhinanda is also given as the author of an extant play entitled *Bhīmaparākrama*, but here too the precise identity of the person referred to is unknown.[30]

We are thus left with the *Rāmacarita* as the only large work certainly by the Pāla poet Abhinanda. Here too there is some uncertainty about the authorship of the final portion of the poem as printed. Cantos 37–40 exist in two different versions, and although one of them is attributed to Abhinnanda it seems likely that neither is genuine, since Canto 36 ends with a verse that seems to mark the end of Abhinanda's project. Kosambi and Gokhale assume that his patron had died and that the project was abandoned. In any case the poem is a long one as it is, containing 36 cantos, averaging more than 100 verses each.

Beyond this there are a good many verses attributed to Abhinanda and Gauḍa Abhinanda in the anthologies, most notably the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*. I shall deal briefly with these before turning to the *Rāmacarita* itself.

Although verses by Abhinanda are included in several early anthologies, collections other than the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* generally restrict their choices to poems that do not deviate from the usual topics of Sanskrit court poetry, and therefore have less to offer on the relevant peculiarities of Pāla-style poetry. Even in these more conventional verses, however, Abhinanda's unusual diction is often on view, and before turning to the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* I give one example of such a verse, included by the anthologist Śrīdharadāsa in his section on kisses.[31]

For some stretch of time he keeps it up,
this kiss she has allowed
even while declining,
for he both tastes
and at the same time
scrutinizes closely
the face of his beloved:
how her lower lip shows fear of being bitten,

29. The most extensive work on the history of the entire complex of *Yogavāsiṣṭha* texts has been done by Walther Slaje. For a summary, see Hanneder 2000.

30. Warder 5.127ff, § 2985ff.

31. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1102 (attributed to Abhinanda):
kiyantaṃcit kālaṃ daśana-pada-bhītâdhara-dalaṃ
lalāṭa-prasveda-skhalad-alakam uttāla-nayanam /
niṣedhânujñātaṃ pulakita-kapolaṃ priyatamo
vadhū-vaktrâmbhojaṃ rasayati ca nirvarṇayati ca //

how her bangs lie splayed
in the rising wetness on her forehead,
how the fine hairs on her cheek
stand on end,
how her eyes grow big.

The verse works better in the original language, partly because the Sanskrit word for "face" (here *vaktra*) also (and more directly) means "mouth."

Here the bulk of the verse delivers the usual list of the involuntary symptoms (*sāttvikabhāva*s) of sexual excitement—trembling, sweating, bristling, dilating—but the opening and closing phrases are distinctive. The first word of this verse, *kiyantaṃcit* ("of a certain extent," "of indescribable length"), is a good example of Abhinanda's talent for coming up with uncommon constructions that are immediately understandable. The word is an indefinite adjective formed by adding the formative suffix *cit* to an interrogative adjective, but while the interrogative phrase *kiyantaṃ kālam* ("for how long?") is a very common cliche at the beginning of verses in the *Mahābhārata* epic and elsewhere, the indefinitized form is scarcely recorded in texts on this side of the *Śatapaṭha Brāhmaṇa*. Yet anyone who knows Sanskrit will easily catch its meaning. The result is that the first two words of the verse are a sort of poem in themselves, a pleasant little surprise that casts a favorable influence over one's experience of the rest of the verse.

It is the close of the verse, however, that makes clear the antecedents of this device. We have already seen that this combination of two contrasting verbs joined by two instances of the conjunction *ca* at the end of a verse in *śikhariṇī* meter—here *rasayati ca nirvarṇayati ca*, "both tastes and scrutinizes"—is one of the most unmistakable trademarks of the verse style of Bhavabhūti. We have seen also his use of this technique to express experiential paradoxes, as well as his obsession with the simultaneous presence of immersion in an emotion and the observation (aesthetic or otherwise) of it, which here appears in the man's both tasting and examining. As it happens, Bhavabhūti was also fond of uncommon grammatical conventions, some of which resemble the device used at the beginning of Abhinanda's verse—Bhavabhūti has even been known to indefinitize less common interrogatives, producing forms such as *kutastyo 'pi*, "from somewhere or other."[32]

Most of the two dozen or so verses attributed to Abhinanda in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* are also conventional in content, but some of them display the wider interest of the Pāla poets in more homely topics of description. Abhinanda's offerings in this category are notable for their attention to a wide

32. These topics are discussed in Chapter 14 on "The Plays of Bhavabhūti."

range of sensory experiences and for the emotional impact of the descriptions. A good example is a verse included in the section on Autumn, with its evocation of the simple pleasure of the season:[33]

There are trails of sugarcane juice on the cart paths,
and banners of lingering dust;
on the tips of the barley, bowing
with ripeness, a row of parrots perches;
a line of minnows swims through the ditches
all the way from the fields to the reservoir;
on the banks of the rivers the glistening mud
gives relief from the heat to the oxherd.

The pan-aesthetic approach used here has many parallels in Abhinanda's *mahākāvya*. The verse once again is marked by the poet's gentle idiosyncracies in diction. The use of the word *ukṣa* ("ox" or "bull") at the end, for example, is rather unusual in itself in comparison with words such as *gopāla*, and in its echoing of the opening word *ikṣu* it gives a pretty little flourish to exit on. There may also be examples of vernacular diction in the verse.[34]

Another verse by Abhinanda involving the naturalistic description of the season has several echoes of earlier poets. Bāṇa had been a master in describing the curling and hanging of smoke in the air.[35] In Abhinanda's hands smoke is described with equal realism, together with another device that we have seen to be favored by Bāṇa and his followers, the tripling of visual shapes. But Abhinanda adds to these features a kind of atmospheric evocation that will be of great importance in his *mahākāvya* as well. The verse is from the section on Early Winter:[36]

Now at the end of day
the round villages have a special charm,
with threshing circles spread on their open spaces,

33. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 282:

ikṣu-tvak-kṣoda-sārāḥ śakaṭa-saraṇayo dhīra-dhūlī-patākāḥ
pāka-svīkāra-namre śirasi niviśate śūka-śāleḥ śukâlī /
kedārebhyaḥ praṇālaiḥ praviśati śapharī-paṅktir ādhāram ārād
acchaḥ kaccheṣu paṅkaḥ sukhayati saritām ātapād ukṣa-pālam //

34. Ingalls (1965: 490, n. 282), contended that this may be the first use in Sanskrit of the word *accha* (which I have translated here as "glistening") in its modern meaning of "good," and also that the word *dhīra* (which I have translated as "lingering") also has a local meaning of "saffron."

35. A famous example is *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1174.

36. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 303:

ābhoginaḥ kim api samprati vāsarânte
sampanna-śāli-khala-pallavitôpaśalyāḥ /

and their circumferences ringed
by a line of smoke from cowdung fires,
bent down by the burden of frost.

Here, in addition to the beauty of the combined evocation of sight, smell, and touch, the images evoked are put to further use in the poem by cooperating in the building of a set of visually echoed rings, somewhat like the multiple cones conjured up in Rājaśekhara's verse on the diabolo dance already described,[37] and here contributing to the feeling of cozy enclosure within domestic circles, providing shelter from the growing chill in the air.

For this as well, partial models can be found. Bhavabhūti, for example, composed powerful examples of this type, including the wonderful verse on the approach of darkness in the prelude to Act 5 of his *Mālatīmādhava*, which sets the mood for the horrific cemetery scene that follows. In Bhavabhūti's play, however, the mood in question fits neatly within the traditional framework of recognized *rasa*s and *bhāva*s, as is also true in the verse from Rājaśekhara's play. In Abhinanda's verse the emotion evoked is something more everyday, rustic in this particular instance but not foreign to anyone, and it involves a palpable pleasure that is not so easily categorized in conventional terms, or at the least we can say that even if it evokes an official *bhāva* it does so through the use of unusual *vibhāva*s. That is what provides an extra little element of surprise when the pleasure is recognized as something recorded in our individual past experience—in accordance with classical *rasa* theory, but perhaps not accounted for in conventional lists—and the poetic goal of *camatkāra* always depends on a combination of surprise and recognition.

As a final example of Abhinanda's anthology verses, consider another vignette that is once again extremely atmospheric in the most literal way. His descriptive verses usually bring to life features of a scene that are in the air, whether they are visual, aural, olfactory, or tactile, and very often with a combination of more than one of these. A good example is this verse from the section on the Rainy Season:[38]

The nights pack deepness.
The dark mass that fills them

grāmās tuṣāra-bhara-bandhura-gomayâgni-
dhūmâvalī-valaya-mekhalino haranti//

37. Rājaśekhara's verse and its antecedents in verses by Bāṇa are described in the earlier chapter on Bāṇa's verse poetry, "On Bāṇa's Boldness."

38. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 252:
vidyud-dīdhiti-bheda-bhīṣaṇa-tamaḥ-stomântarāḥ saṃtata-
śyāmâmbhodhara-rodha-saṃkaṭa-viyad-viproṣita-jyotiṣaḥ /

is broken only by frightening lightning flashes;
the sky is jammed with continuous black clouds
that have blocked out the moon and stars;
the trees nearby are inferred from the fireflies;
and over all is the sound of the swarms of insects
intoxicated by the pouring rain.

Here the pitch blackness of the night is set off by flashes of both lightning and lightning bugs, and overlaid first by the droning of the rain and then, over that, the droning of the insects, and still again over that the oppressive presence of the evoked humidity.

Of course, Abhinanda had models for precisely this sort of evocation among the poets in his line. Bāṇa himself probably wrote a separate work containing such verses, judging from the masterly poems on rain and poverty preserved in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (verses 1304 and 1305). It is useful, in judging the extent to which such verses are characteristic of a particular group of poets, to ask how Māgha, for example, might have handled the topic: his darkness would have been expressed in rays involved in some fancied figuration rather than the palpable mass we have here, and although Māgha was also not averse to fireflies he was more comfortable with bees than with the more homely insects we hear droning in this verse.

One final note on the influence of Bāṇa in such verses: in each of these verses there are interesting things to be learned in observing the varying lengths of nominal compounds used and how they are distributed. In the interests of space I will comment only on the last example given, which provides in this area an example of Abhinanda's tendency to achieve good effects from slightly idiosyncratic tweakings of established procedures. A pattern used very frequently by Bāṇa is to use short freestanding words only for the basic elements of the skeleton, and to place the attributive descriptions making up the rest of the verse in long unbroken compounds, a technique probably extended into verse composition from the model of the notoriously long compounds he uses in his prose poems. This pattern becomes formulaic in some of the Pāla poets, including Abhinanda's father Śatānanda and their compatriot Vallana. They tend to aim at symmetrical structures, and for Vallana in particular this often seems largely pictorial—his patterns are easily spotted by glancing at the verses on a printed page. But in this verse Abhinanda's placement of the compounds is conspicuously

khadyotânumitôpakaṇṭha-taravaḥ puṣṇanti gambhīratām
āsārôdaka-matta-kīṭa-paṭalī-kvāṇôttarā rātrayaḥ //

staggered. Near the end of the first quarter of his verse the single word *saṃtata* begins a compound that runs continuously into and throughout the rest of the verse half, where in the usual practice there would be a break at the end of the quarter. The word therefore sticks out, and not unexpressively: the meaning of this word is "continuing, unbroken."

In examining such techniques it is important not to assume, as some scholars have implied in reaction to Bāṇa's prose style, that the use of long compounds is an invariable feature of his legacy. As Bāṇa's own verses show, he was not afraid to use compounds in more daring ways than many other poets had done, but he always used them appropriately, and this is a lesson that Abhinanda learned well.

In the *Rāmacarita* we will see, among other things, that Abhinanda aims at a simple and direct style of presentation, in which long compounds—which he is fully capable of deploying to good effect—are less often appropriate than in verses such as these. In the course of that longer work his goal appears to be one that is to be achieved cumulatively, and this calls for a gentle approach. That approach, however, requires a boldness of its own, involving the use of atmospheric references and evocative effects of the type we have just seen, as devices both for the overall structuring of his poem and for the accomplishment of specific details of emotional suggestion. This sort of daring is equally a part of Bāṇa's legacy.

I turn now to that longer poem.

C. Abhinanda's *Mahākāvya*

The *Rāmacarita* begins very dramatically in the middle of the action of its well-known story, at the suspenseful moment at the end of the rainy season when Rāma and his brother Lakṣmaṇa have waited throughout four long months for the time when Sugrīva will come to help them find Sītā, and are now watching anxiously from their damp and lonely perch on the mountainside to see if he will keep his word.

This fact provides the clearest indication that none of the authors of the standard modern histories of Sanskrit literature who characterize the *Rāmacarita*—excepting only the two most detailed treatments, those by M. Krishnamachariar and his admirer A. K. Warder[39]—ever looked at even the opening verse of the poem, since none of them managed to correct the blunder

39. Krishnamachariar 1970; Warder 1972–92.

they reproduce of placing the beginning of the poem half a year earlier, at the abduction of Sītā.[40]

In making this mistake, they not only ignore all the events that intervened between the abduction of Sītā and the point at which the poem actually begins, including the initial wanderings of the grief-stricken brothers, the negotiations with Sugrīva, the murder of Vālin, and the long wait during the monsoon while Sugrīva cavorted in his new palace with his new wife. More importantly, they miss the true nature of the dramatic beginning, which from the very start gives evidence of the plan that I have suggested, of proceeding directly and patiently to deploy the scheme of atmospheric references that will inform the poem. Abhinanda begins his poem with a series of verses involving the poetic ornament called *vyatireka*, "contrast," with the contrast in question being that between clearing the external atmosphere and the continuing dampness of the brothers' spirits; in its simplicity and straightforwardness this opening is entirely different from the convoluted and complex opening of Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* and the *mahākāvya*s that imitate it. The canto is composed in the shortest of the poem's running meters, the common *anuṣṭubh*:[41]

1. Then, on a plateau on Mount Mālyavān, came the end of the rainy season, which for Rāma in his separation had brought such pain that his tears were hard to stop.

40. Keith 1920, 135: "which deals with the story of Rāma from the rape of Sītā"; Winternitz 1922, 74 n. 4: "das die Geschichte Rāmas vom Raub der Sītā an behandelt"; Dasgupta and De 1947, 324: "weaves a Mahākāvya of the elaborate kind out of the well-worn Rāmāyaṇa story, commencing from the abduction of Sītā"; Lienhard 1984, 200: "a Rāma poem in thirty-six cantos beginning with the abduction of Sītā"; R. Nanavati in Datta 1.6, s.v. 'Abhinanda': "dealing with the Ramayana story from Sītā's abduction up to the killing of the demons Kumbha and Vikumbha." Renou and Filliozat 1953, 22, are perhaps somewhat better in merely implying that the story is told from the beginning: "un *Rāmacarita* en 36 chantes, résumé du Rāmāyaṇa jusqu'à la mort de Kumbha-Nikumbha." Bhattacharji 1993, 251, is bad in getting both ends wrong: "It begins with Sītā's abduction and ends where the Uttarakāṇḍa ends." Jha's translation in Winternitz 1963, 82 n. 1, is even worse, in combining this erroneous implication with a complete misunderstanding of Winternitz's mistaken statement: "an epic *Rāmacarita*, that narrates the story of Rāma from the beginning up to the abduction of Sītā"!

41. *Rāmacarita* 1.1–5 (all quotations from the *Rāmacarita* are based on the edition in Rāmaswāmī 1930):

atha mālyavataḥ prasthe kākutsthasya viyoginaḥ /
durnivārâśru-saṃvego jagāma jaladâgamaḥ //1//
śaśāma vâṣṭir meghānām utsaṅge tasya bhūbhṛtaḥ /
virarāma na rāmasya dhārā-santatir aśruṇaḥ //2//
itas tataḥ pariṇatiṃ bheje barhiṇa-kūjitam /
hā priye rāja-putrîti na rāma-paridevitam //3//

2. The raining of the clouds ceased on the top of the mountains, but the steady flow of Rāma's tears did not end.
3. All around, the crying of the peacocks came to its conclusion, but not Rāma's lamenting, "Alas, my dear princess."
4. The sun and moon, free of dust, took on an indescribable splendor, but the complexion of the two sons of Dāsaratha remained spoiled by separation, just as before.
5. The sky was splendid with its stainless moon; the lake was beautiful with opened lotuses; but the two brothers drooped, their faces covered with tears.

Despite its apparent simplicity and the real accessibility of its language, this passage is smoother and more sophisticated in its tone than the early styles associated with the epics or with Aśvaghoṣa. In addition to the many subtle plays on words (*jagāma jaladâgamaḥ, virarāma na rāmasya*, and so on) and archaic touches of the gentle type favored by Abhinanda (for example, the lengthening of the final vowel of the first component in the compound *sūryā-candramasoḥ*, which is a feature of Vedic grammar less common in the classical language), the underlying richness in the treatment of the poetic figures has been mentioned by several of the Sanskrit writers on poetics. Bhoja, for example, gave praise in both his works on poetics to the subtle ways in which the poet has strengthened the poetic contrast aimed at in two of these verses.[42] In the second verse there is a pun in the phrase *utsaṅge tasya bhūbhṛtaḥ*, which in addition to meaning "on the slope of that mountain" can also mean "onto the lap of that king"; the second half of the verse makes it clear that the first meaning is intended, which may produce a correction of the original impression of similarity in the direction of a heightened contrast. Similarly, the first half of the fifth verse is likely to set up an expectation, given the frequency with which faces are compared to the full moon and to the full-blown lotus in Sanskrit poetry, that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will be compared to the serene sky and lake, and only in the continuation of this verse is the expectation reversed.

It is characteristic of Abhinanda's style that none of these bits of added value are essential to the working of the verse on a basic level. The literal meaning is readily clear, and even the intended poetic ornament will be delivered whether

kâpy abhikhyā virajasoḥ sūryā-candramasor abhūt /
dāśarathyos tathâivâsīd ayogôpahatā ruciḥ //4//
nirmalêndu nabho reje vikacâbjaṃ babhau saraḥ /
paraṃpary-aśru-vadanau mamlatur bhrātarāv ubhau //5//

42. Warder 5.115–16.

or not these subtle enhancements are detected by the reader. Just as importantly, most of the readers in the intended audience of the poem would surely have detected them without hesitation.

C.1. Naturalism

The deliberate pace set in this opening passage is soon put to use in what is probably the single most startling feature of the poem—extended naturalistic descriptions in which a steady progression of stylistically straightforward statements describes a series of actions realistically imagined. These descriptions draw heavily on the sights and sounds of everyday village life in ordinary families, in the tradition of Pāla Sanskrit poetry into which Abhinanda was born, but we are no longer in a position to know how many of the details he uses are borrowed from other poets.

To give just one example of an important source now almost entirely lost to us: the lists given by Abhinanda and other Pāla poets such as Vasukalpa of poetic models often include the name of Keśaṭa, who is now known almost exclusively for a single verse preserved in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*.[43] The verse describes a woman whose husband has just returned from a long journey across the desert. Because her in-laws are also there to greet him, the wife cannot show her feelings directly; instead she uses her own fingers to gently comb the dust from the mane of her husband's camel. This and other images are still traceable in descriptions of women in love found in the plays of Bhavabhūti and are reused by Abhinanda in his poem, transferring them, as he does through most of the *Rāmacarita*, to the description of close relationships between male characters.

Keep the image of combing with fingers in mind while reading the following passage from the second canto of the *Rāmacarita*, and notice also that although the verses in the passage are syntactically independent, as *kāvya* verses are, the overall effect is more reminiscent of the flowing narrative action of the old epics (and, perhaps more importantly, of more recent poems in Prakrit) than of the triphammer pointed style of a typical *mahākāvya*. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are looking for a place to bed down for the night; the passage is quite significantly composed in the *rathoddhatā* meter, which since at least the time of Kālidāsa had been especially associated with treatments of romantic love:[44]

> Examining the area, the two Rāghavas soon picked a spot where no breeze from a lotus pond blew, and where the moonlight could not be seen.

43. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 512, in the section on "The Blossoming of Love."

44. *Rāmacarita* 2.42–51:
yatra vāti na kumudvatī-marut kaumudī bata na yatra vīkṣyate /

Lakṣmaṇa spread a place with fresh straw for his dear Rāma to lie on, purifying it by the application of his eyes and palms, and removing hidden thorns and pebbles.

When his older brother suddenly became sleepy he washed his lotus feet, drying them with his own garment and skillfully massaging them repeatedly with his hands.

For a long time he shed tears and rubbed with his hand, his older brother's only aid, those feet on which the royal marks had been battered by the road.

Gently he straightened his tangled dreadlocks, combing them with his own fingernails. He shook out the upper sheet, which had slipped away from the lower cloth, and returned it to the area where Rāma would lie.

He laid the two quivers at the sides; he worshipped the bow and put it at the head; and he dusted off the covered mat by shaking his own skirt out over it and drawing it back.

When in these ways his younger brother's repeated services had overcome the pain of his banishment, Rāma lay down for a while, his senses weary, as if he wished to sleep.

Gradually he saw that his younger brother was awake, and as their opened eyes met, Rāma propped his left arm on its elbow, placed his head on its palm, and spoke brief words:

taṃ nirūpita-samantam añjasā bhejatuḥ parisaraṃ raghûdvahau //42//
dṛṣṭi-pāṇi-tala-pāta-śodhitām uddhṛta-sthagita-kaṇṭakāvaṭām /
astṛṇān nava-tṛṇena medināṃ rāmabhadra-śayanāya lakṣmaṇaḥ //43//
nirṇineja sahasā suṣupsataḥ pāda-padma-yugam agra-janmanaḥ/
svâṃśukôddhṛta-jalaṃ karâbjayoḥ kauśalāc ca samavāhayat punaḥ //44//
adhva-jarjarita-rāja-lakṣaṇaṃ lakṣmaṇaś caraṇam agra-janmanaḥ /
āmamarśa ciram aśru vartayan kevalôpakaraṇena pāṇinā //45//
svairam agra-karajair vivṛtya ca vyākulāṃ samanayaj jaṭâṭavīm /
aṅga-deśam anayad vidhūya ca srastarâtisṛtam añcalaṃ tvacaḥ //46//
pārśvayor upadadhe maheṣudhī ādade śirasi pūjitaṃ dhanuḥ /
unmamārja dhuta-saṃhṛtena ca svâñcalena punaruktam āstaram //47//
ity ajasram anujāta-sevayā jīyamāna-vana-vāsa-yātanaḥ /
vaptu-kāma iva sālasêndriyaḥ saṃviveśa raghu-nandanaḥ kṣaṇam //48//
mīlitônmiṣita-locanaḥ śanair jāgarūkam avalokya so 'nujam /
ucca-vāma-kara-paṅkajôdara-nyasta-maulir avadan mitaṃ vacaḥ //49//
accha vatsa śayanīyam ātmanaḥ kliśyase kṛśa-taraḥ kiyac ciram /
nidrayā viśadatāṃ vraja kṣaṇaṃ na kṣamaḥ pratiniśītha-jāgaraḥ //50//
prātar asti bahu kṛtyam āvayor bhrātar ātmani kim asy atatparaḥ /
cintyatām uṣasi tasya saṃgatiḥ śītalasya kapi-cakravartinaḥ //51//

"Go to your own bed, my dear. You are so thin; how long will you torment yourself? Refresh yourself a moment with some sleep; it's not good to stay up late every night.

"We have a lot to do in the morning, brother. Why don't you look after yourself? We can think in the morning about how to handle that procrastinating monkey king."

The "realism" in such passages is less simple than it might appear, especially since so few of the characters in the poem are human. Rāma himself is conscious throughout of his own divinity, and the treatment of him plays with a sort of docetism that is sometimes discussed openly and sometimes merely hinted at, as in the statement here, "as if he wished to sleep."

We may call this realism, but in a poem in which so many characters—including in some ways Rāma himself—are not fully human, it is realism of a special sort. Abhinanda's descriptions of the behavior of the demons and flying monkeys in the poem is presumably not based on actual observation, but he does attempt to depict them in ways that make practical sense in terms of everyday experience. His effort of imagination is typically directed not at visual figuration of the sort that Māgha might attempt or causal conceits in the style of Murāri, but rather at trying to visualize how a flying monkey might move his tail in flight, or what a talking monkey might say if another monkey stepped on his tail in the dark, or how a demon official might carry himself in court, given his superhuman sense of smell and his particular dietary interests.

C.2. Atmospherics

More precisely, Abhinanda's goal seems to be to find ways to describe the actions of each of his characters that will connect with the experiences of his readers as directly as the descriptions of cowdung fires and cool mud in his anthology verses. And, as I have suggested in my remarks on those verses, for Abhinanda this usually involves references to atmospheric stimuli. A good example in the opening part of the poem is his attention to the workings of humidity. Lakṣmaṇa alludes to the cumulatively demoralizing effect of the dampness of the monsoon, a palpable emotional fact familiar to anyone who has lived in India, in attempting to boost Rāma out of his depression:[45]

Rest the weight of your body on me and sit up for victory. Please get off this bed, which is in disarray from your swooning and tossing.

45. *Rāmacarita* 1.32–36:

vijayāya bhavâsīno mayy arpita-vapur-bharaḥ /
mūrcchânuvalana-vyastaḥ prastaras tyajyatām ayam //32//
pratîṣṭôpatyakā-sāla-dalâgra-jala-bindavaḥ /

Please, for a moment shake loose the dreadlocks that cling to the slopes of your shoulders, soaked by the drops that have fallen from the leaftips of the sal trees on the mountainside.

Please, for a moment, my brother, take your hand away from your cheek, to loosen this clumped barkcloth knot from your shoulder.

Please, air out these arrows with their soggy fittings; take out your long bow from the old wet cloth of its sheath.

Please, go down from this mountaintop and quit this moping. Kill the ten-headed Rāvaṇa with your arrows, straightened by piercing the ten directions.

The same sensitivities apply in descriptions of the monkeys in the poem. An example from the other end of the humidity scale is the description later in the poem of the expedition of Aṅgada and his troop of monkeys in search of clues to the whereabouts of Sītā. Typically, the passage begins by equating the atmospheric conditions with the emotional situation of the poem's hero:[46]

Then they reached a boundless, burning mountainous desert which seemed an embodiment of Rāma and Sītā's long separation,
where for all their long searching the exhausted monkeys could not find even a vine with a shred of shade, much less Sītā.
At every step they encountered rocks as cruel as Rāvaṇa, but nowhere did they come across a stream as cool as Sītā.

sāryantāṃ kṣaṇam uddhūya sthagitâṃsa-taṭā jaṭāḥ//33//
muhūrtaṃ kriyatām ārya kapola-virahī karaḥ /
vyuṣito valkala-granthir aṃsād unmocyatām ayam //34//
ito vitatya dīyantām iṣavaḥ klinna-yantraṇāḥ /
nirmuktârdra-jarac-cailam ādattām āyataṃ dhanuḥ //35//
ito 'vatīryatāṃ prasthād a-svāsthyam idam ujjhyatām /
ahîṣubhir daśagrīvaṃ daśa-dig-vedha-śodhitaiḥ //36//

46. *Rāmacarita* 10.112–117:

athâpatann a-paryantaṃ jvalantaṃ giri-jaṅgalam /
mūrtimantam ivâyātam a-yogaṃ rāma-sītayoḥ //112//
vicinvantaś cirataraṃ yatra śrāntā vanâukasaḥ /
latām api laghu-cchāyāṃ nâsedur maithilīṃ kutaḥ //113//
grāvāṇo rāvaṇa-krūrās tair ākrāntāḥ pade pade/
āsāditā punāḥ kvâpi na sītā-śītalā sarit //114//
samantād udabhṛjyanta kevalaṃ vālukāsu te /
śuṣkânanāḥ śuṣka-nadīḥ khananto 'mbu na lebhire //115//
girīṣv amārgan plavagās tṛḍ-vegôccalitâsavaḥ /
sannyasta-sītā-vicayāḥ prapāta-salila-srutim //116//
itas tataḥ sikatilāḥ sthalīs tejas-taraṅgiṇīḥ /
te nipetuḥ payo-mohāt pipāsârtās tapasvinaḥ //117//

They were being roasted on the sands that surrounded them
everywhere. With parched mouths they dug in the dry riverbeds,
but found no water.
In the mountains their life breath was being driven out by the power
of their thirst, and they gave up the search for Sītā, hunting only for
a waterfall.
In their anguish, tormented by thirst, in place after place they fell on pools
of sand, thinking there was water where there were only waves of heat.

Fortunately they soon sense a real change in humidity, and through aerial evidence of several kinds discover an opening in the ground through which a cool, moist breeze emerges. They enter and progress through a rapid series of lighting changes: out of the harsh sunlight into a passage in complete darkness, described comically, after which Hanumān plunges still farther down into a subterranean world lit by phosphorescent stones and filled with impressive architechtural adornments lovingly described by the poet. In such passages we seem to be encountering the *mahākāvya* genre as reimagined by an interior decorator.

In other passages, Abhinanda concentrates not so much on the ambient conditions as on the atmospheric features of the characters themselves. In these passages we have more the *mahākāvya* as conceived by a personal hairdresser; the environmental features of interest include personal choices in costume and cosmetics, which he uses at many points in the poem as an external expression of inward character.

Rāvaṇa, for example, displays a fascinating mixture of glamor and brutality when he appears in his nightclub mode, as he does in one torchlit scene in Laṅkā. He has already gone to bed but is suddenly awakened by what the poet calls a "gust of lust" (*madana-vāta*), and he jumps up, changes his clothes, and goes out on the prowl, being the lord of nightstalkers that he is.[47] As part of his preparation he thoughtfully reduces the number of his heads to the number acceptable to human females (that is, one) before slicking down the hair on the remaining head with oil. Then the scene shifts to the place he has headed for, and we are told, in typically atmospheric terms, that Rāvaṇa's arrival there was preceded by the arrival both of the smell of his lavishly applied perfume and of the flashes of light bouncing off his bling-bling jewelry.[48] In its atmospheric synasthesia the scene is reminiscent of the description of the karaoke party the

47. *Rāmacarita* 19.54:
atrântare madana-vāta-pradhūta-nidraḥ sa drāg dhṛtânya-racano rajanīcarêndraḥ.
48. *Rāmacarita* 19.56 (meter: *vasantatilaka*):
āśāḥ sudūram abhavann adhivāsa-bhājo nirhāriṇāparimalenavilepanānām/
āsīn nabhaḥ sphurita-śakra-dhanuḥ -sahasraṃ tasyâbhitaś churitam ābharaṇa-prabhābhiḥ //56//

night before, at which the drunken Rāvaṇa had not only tried to sing along with the band but had also grabbed a *mṛdaṅgam* drum and started a sort of conga line.

Time after time the emotional events in the poem are expressed through their parallels in these atmospheric stimuli. Sight and smell are combined again, for example, in Abhinanda's expression of the impact of Vibhīṣaṇa's banishment on the inhabitants of the city:[49]

> Then, although jewelled lamps were burning and flowers were blossoming, it was as if the city of Laṅkā had no light and no fragrance.

Aerial conditions are crucial both for the overall structure of the poem and its division into cantos, and also for the treatment of the emotional progress of the characters in the poem. We have seen how the poem opens with the use of a series of climatic contrasts to express the uneasiness of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. As the poem progresses their emotions are more often paralleled by the weather and lighting conditions, as we saw in Lakṣmaṇa's references to sogginess. By the end of the first canto the depression of the two brothers is being equated with the setting of the sun, and the theme of heavenly luminaries is picked up on in the first of a number of metapoetic verses added by Abhinanda at the junctures between cantos:[50]

> Then those two, their eyes filled with tears, themselves being watched with distress by the animals, fell to the earth, as if the moon and the sun had fallen down from the sky.
>
> When those two sons of Daśaratha had fallen to the earth in this way, the faces of the women of all ten directions lost their color, as if because of their distress.

49. *Rāmacarita* 24.2:

jvalatsu maṇi-dīpeṣu puṣpeṣu vikasatsv api /
an-ālokam an-āmodam abhūl laṅkā-puraṃ tadā //2//

50. *Rāmacarita* 1.108–110:

tatas tau sâśru-nayanau mṛgair vidhura-vīkṣitau /
nipetatur diva iva bhraṣṭau vidhu-ravī kṣitau //108//
iti nipatitayos tayor dvayoḥ
daśaratha-nandanayor mahī-tale /
daśabhir api dig-aṅganā-mukhair
adhṛti-vaśād iva tatyaje ruciḥ //109//
ete nikāma-rasikasya jayanti pādāḥ
śrī-hāravarṣa-yuvarāja-mahītalêndoḥ /
yair dvādaśârka-kiraṇôtkara-durnivāraḥ
sṛṣṭo 'bhinanda-kumudasya mahā-vikāsaḥ //110//

> Victorious are these beams of light [or lines of poetry, or revered feet] of the moon on this earth, Śrī Hāravarṣa Yuvarāja, who has abundant *rasa*; he has created the great blossoming of the waterlily that is Abhinanda, whose wide spreading the combined rays of the twelve suns of the apocalypse will be hard put to reverse.

C.3. Lighting

Of the various kinds of things in the air in the *Rāmacarita*, lighting conditions are by far the most important, since they are literally the most visible markers of the coordinated patterns of activity and poetic texture that make up the poem. Throughout the poem the lighting changes through a series of settings each of which corresponds to a particular flavor of action. The relatively few scenes that occur in normal daylight (as opposed to the extreme light that we saw in the description of the desert), whether outdoors or indoors, involve the straightforward bits of business: taking a roll call, attending to matters in court, carrying out the preliminary maneuvers of war, and so on. In contrast, moonlight is the lighting appropriate to personal introspection and other forms of individual searching; there are beautiful examples in the private conversation that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have while lying awake in the moonlight in the third canto, in Hanumān's stealthy search through the moonlit palaces of Laṅkā on his first night there in the eighteenth canto, and in Vibhīṣaṇa's lonely moonlit walk along the beach as he tries to decide what to do in the twenty-fourth canto. Similarly, the nocturnal scenes that occur by torchlight involve wilder and more garish actions, whether of partying or of fighting, while the fantasy scene in Svayaṃprabhā's cave in the twelfth canto occurs under eerie phosphorescent lighting. And several desperate scenes take place in pitch darkness.

In addition to these recurring uses of stable lighting conditions, similar assignments are given to the various categories of transitions between these states. Sunset, temporary darkness, moonrise, moonset, sunrise, and the various levels of twilight along the way, each occur a half dozen times or more in the poem, each with its own category of narrative task and each providing an opportunity for a shift in poetic texture. These transitions are used as times in which the characters, rather than being actively involved in some bit of business, are allowed to take stock of their situations. The resulting pauses in the action also give the poet a chance to take one of the several modes of poetic enhancement out for a spin, and it is here that Abhinanda's forays into punning and rhyming and other such techniques, gentle as they are, tend to occur.

If space permitted, many further examples of atmospheric effects could be given; a particularly striking set of such effects, to mention but one, can be

found in the varying poetic techniques used in a number of scenes of sunset in the poem.

As a final example combining many of the distinctive features of the *Rāmacarita*, consider a passage involving not sunset but moonrise. It occurs in the thirty-first canto, immediately after the scene of a terrible battle fought after sundown. The demons have a double advantage in night-time combat: they can see well in the dark, but are themselves difficult to see because of their black skin. Rāvaṇa's son Indrajit, frustrated by his inability to make progress against Rāma's army of monkeys even under cover of darkness, finally resorts to a dreadful magical weapon, his Snake Snare, with which he lassos both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and holds them helpless as every inch of their bodies is pierced by enemy arrows. But he is then foiled in his hope of carrying away their bodies for display; they are protected by his uncle, Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhīṣaṇa, who has gone over to Rāma's side but who as a demon can see in the dark.

As soon as Indrajit leaves the moon appears:[51]

43. With that Indrajit left the field and entered Laṅkā, and slowly the moon rose, piercing the helpless darkness.

51. *Rāmacarita* 31.43–54:

ity utsṛjya raṇaṃ laṅkāṃ praviṣṭe vāsava-dviṣi/
udiyāya śanair indur bhindann a-śaraṇaṃ tamaḥ //43//
āninīya vimānena trijaṭā tatra jānakīm /
rāmasya taṃ darśayituṃ daśāṃ daśamukhâjñayā //44//
sāmare 'bodhayat sadyaḥ tāṃ tathā pakṣa-pātinī /
paśyanty api yathā patyur atyayaṃ na mamāra sā //45//
tau tathôrvyāṃ nipatitau niṣpandau nṛpa-nandanau /
vilokya candrikâloke vilalāpa kapîśvaraḥ //46//
aho bata mahâścaryaṃ yad an-āryeṇa rakṣasā /
hatāv imau tamisreṇa sūryā-candramasāv iva//47//
bhramaḥ svapno 'tha māyêyaṃ mahatī pitāśinām /
paśyāmi yad a-saṃbhāvyaṃ rāma-lakṣmaṇayor idam//48//
hā deva kva dṛśo dadyām ari-bāṇāḥ paraṃ puraḥ/
nāsti kṣamā-tilakyos tilasyâpy antaraṃ tanau //49//
dhiṅ māṃ kṛta-ghnam a-snigdham a-kṣataṃ pāpam a-trapam /
tayoḥ paśyāmi kadanaṃ kṛtam evam arātinā //50//
kim a-śaktāḥ kim a-snigdhāḥ sarve vana-carā vayam /
ekaṃ bhrātaram ādāya deva dūraṃ gato 'si yat //51//
kiṃ nâdiśasi saumitre rāma kiṃ māṃ na bhāṣase /
a-pramādaḥ kutastyo 'yaṃ yuvayor ubhayor api //52//
a-kṛtrimaiś cāṭu-śataiś caraṇāv ayam ādade /
kêyaṃ saṃprati saumitre vyathāyām a-vibhāgitā //53//
āmṛśāmi kva hastena kva likhāmi nakhais tvacam /
pṛcchāmi sahyaṃ kva yuvāṃ prahṛtaṃ kva na śatruṇā //54//

44. By order of Rāvaṇa, Trijaṭā brought Sītā in a flying car to show her the conditionof Rāma.[52]
45. Although she could see the slaughter of her husband, as they hovered in the sky she (Trijaṭā) told her that he had not died.[53]
46. Seeing in the moonlight those two princes fallen motionless on the ground in that condition, the monkey king (Sugrīva) lamented.
47. Ah! Ah, what a terrible shock, that an ignoble demon has brought down these two, as darkness brings down the sun and moon.
48. Is this an hallucination, or a dream, or some great magic of the demons, that I see this unimaginable thing that has happened to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa?
49. Ah, Lord, where can I my turn eyes, when every spot is filled with enemy arrows? There is not even the interval of a sesame seed on the bodies of these two ornaments of the earth.
50. Damn me for being ungrateful, unkind, uninjured, wicked, shameless, that I see this kind of slaughter committed by the enemy.
51. Are all of us monkeys so incapable, so unkind, that you, Lord, have abandoned us, taking only your brother with you?
52. Will you not give me orders, Lakṣmana? Rāma, will you not speak to me? Where has this lack of favor come from that both of you display?
53. I have grasped your feet with hundreds of heartfelt flatteries, Lakṣmaṇa, how can you refuse to share this way in a time of pain?
54. Where can I rub you with my hand? Where can I scratch your skin with my nails? I ask you both, on what spot can you bear it? What place has not been wounded by the enemy?

The lament goes on at length, but we will stop at this characteristic touch of fantastic realism: Sugrīva is a monkey, and despite the stock features of his lament he turns in despair to every monkey's refuge in dealing with injured loved ones—the thought of grooming them with his nails. Whether more should be made of this is difficult to say.

52. Trijaṭā is a female demon assigned to guard Sītā but sympathetic to her.

53. As printed the verse says that she explained it to her in such a way that she did not immediately die even upon seeing the slaughter of her husband. I have emended the text and translation of the verse on the basis of variant readings; in view of subsequent events it becomes clear that they are too high in the air to hear individual speeches, and it is only upon later hearing the roar of lamentation from the full crowd of monkeys that Sītā realizes the truth and faints.

Notice, as before, the straightforward simplicity of the surface texture throughout, and the sprinkling of slightly greater richness underneath (once again the archaic compound *sūryā-candramasau*, and the borrowings from Bhavabhūti, including the previously mentioned word *kutastyaḥ* in verse 52 and the questions that open verse 48, which are clear echoes of a famous verse by him).[54]

Of greatest interest here, however, are the significant changes in the depiction of these events from the version given in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the epic there is, to begin with, no mention of moonrise at this point. In fact in that version, although the battle begins in darkness, somehow enough light to see by has developed well before the deployment of the Snake Noose; Rāma has even sent scouts up in the air to view the battlefield. The introduction of moonrise here is entirely for Abhinanda's usual purpose of using lighting conditions as emotional settings, here the shift from the terrible tragedy in darkness to the uncertain scene in moonlight, in which it appears but is not certain that the two heroes have been killed.

Even more interesting is the reversal of the roles of Sītā and Sugrīva, in accordance with Abhinanda's persistent practice of shifting important emotional expressions from the original female characters to male ones. In Vālmīki's version, the first one to see the fallen bodies of Rāma and his brother is Sugrīva, who is already close by on the battlefield. He sees their condition but is not allowed by the poet to lament them, since that is a role reserved for Rāma's wife Sītā. In the epic she is brought to the scene only later, at which point she delivers a long lament.

The situation is fully reversed in the version told by Abhinanda, who apparently does not accept Sītā's claim to this right. In the *Rāmacarita* he moves events around so as to have her brought quickly to the scene, before Sugrīva is even mentioned, and just as quickly removed from consideration. She says nothing, and it is then Sugrīva who offers the lament, which is long and emotional.

Actually Sugrīva is third in line for this role in the poem overall. It would go by preference to Lakṣmaṇa (who is told early on by Rāma that his tearful glance is more important to Rāma than finding news of Sītā),[55] but he is now lying lifeless on the ground. Second would be the lovable Hanumān, but in this scene he is outranked by his king, Sugrīva.

It is quite clear that Abhinanda knows that his rearrangement will be viewed as a reversal of the normal situation. He records that reaction repeatedly within

54. *Uttararāmacarita* 1.35: *viniścetuṃ śakyo na sukham iti vā duḥkham iti vā*

55. *Rāmacarita* 4.71:
tathā na tasyā mṛga-śāva-cakṣuṣaḥ pravṛtti-lopena mamâdhiredhate /
ghanâśrumārgôpahatânana-dyuteḥ yathâika-bandhor avalokanena te //

the poem itself in the form of remarks voiced by each of the speakers heard after Sugrīva. First to speak are the monkeys as a group, who complain in the midst of their own laments, in referring to Sugrīva, that "he is wailing for the Raghu heroes like a woman who has lost her husband."[56] And next is Vibhīṣaṇa, who scolds him for his effeminate behavior:[57]

> Move ahead, king, remembering the duties of a king. Turn back from the path followed by idiots and eunuchs.
> Why should we be raining tears here like women? Come, let's travel the bright path, clad in the armor of heroes.

For Abhinanda's own personal feeling on the roles of kings, we may now turn to the remarks he has left us in the meta-verses attached to the cantos of his poem.

D. Abhinanda's Meta-comments

Our richest source of information on how Abhinanda viewed his own poem and its history is the large number of verses inserted between various cantos, all dealing, in one way or another, with his young patron, the Yuvarāja Hāravarṣa. In the printed edition there are some 67 of these, but because some of the verses are used more than once, the total of unique verses is about 40.

D.1. His Patron

In the added verses Abhinanda, who calls himself both Abhinanda Śātānandi and Āryavilāsa, refers to his patron as the Yuvarāja Hāravarṣa, son of Vikramaśīla and ornament of the family of the Pālas, and of Devapāla's family in particular, and himself a ruler (*pṛthvīpāla*). Dharmapāla was the second king in the major Pāla line, and the founder of the Vikramaśīla monastery. On the theory that he had named the monastery after himself, the editor of the *Rāmacarita* believed that Abhinanda's patron was Dharmapāla's own son and successor, Devapāla.[58]

56. *Rāmacarita* 31.75ab:
ayaṃ yoṣid a-vīrêva raghu-vīrau viroditi.
57. *Rāmacarita* 31.94–95:
pravartasva mahārāja rāja-dharmam anusmaran /
nivartasva jaḍa-klība-jana-juṣṭād itaḥ pathāḥ //94//
aśru-durdinam asmākaṃ kim idaṃ yoṣitām iva /
ehi yāmo gatiṃ śuklām ujjvalair vīra-varmabhiḥ //95//
58. Rāmaswāmī 1930, xvi–xx.

For several reasons, however, Kosambi argued,[59] somewhat more plausibly I think, that Hāravarṣa was actually Devapāla's son Rājyapāla, who as Yuvarāja ruled to the extent of signing royal orders during a part of Devapāla's reign, but who appears not to have outlived his father.

His death might have explained, they further argue, Abhinanda's failure to complete the *Rāmacarita*, as well as his recorded association with other patrons nearby. The resulting picture would have Abhinanda beginning his activity as a poet around the end of Devapāla's reign in 850.

Only two of the verses do not refer to the Yuvarāja. One is the very last verse, which is also the longest, a bi-textual verse that equates the body of Śiva with the army of monkeys as a cause of the beheading of Rāvaṇa;[60] the peculiarities of the verse compared to the other added verses suggest that it marks a recognition of the end of Abhinanda's work on the poem. In addition to this there is one other verse that rather than mentioning the Yuvarāja's connection with the poem praises Abhinanda directly. This fact, together with the fact that the verse is repeated far more often than any other—it occurs a dozen times altogether—makes me suspect that it was composed by the Yuvarāja himself and given to Abhinanda for use as a blurb in the poem. The verse gives an inventory of the sweet milky drinks that have become unnecessary now that Abhinanda's verses are in circulation.[61]

D.2. His Patron's Role

That the patron was a poet himself is mentioned several times in the verses (he was "not jealous, although a poet; although a ruler, not perverse; although

59. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lviii–lxx.

60. After *sarga* 36 (p. 331, second extra verse):

ṛkṣāṇāṃ bhūri-dhāmnāṃ śritam adhipatinā prasphurad-bhīma-tāraṃ
sphāraṃ netrânalena prasabha-niyamitôccāpa-mīna-dhvajena /
rāmâyattaṃ purâreḥ kumuda-śuci lasan-nīla-sugrīvam aṅgaṃ
plāvaṅgaṃ sainyam anyad daśavadana-śira-ccheda-hetuḥ śriye 'stu //

61. After *sarga* 7 (p. 63, fourth extra verse) [also after *sarga* 8 (p. 72); after *sarga* 9 (p. 81); after *sarga* 10 (p. 91); after *sarga* 11 (p. 102); after *sarga* 12 (p. 111); after *sarga* 13 (p. 119); after *sarga* 14 (p. 130); after *sarga* 17 (p. 152); after *sarga* 20 (p. 178); after *sarga* 24 (p. 218); after *sarga* 36 (p. 331)]:

kiṃ śīdhubhir bhavatu phāṇita-śarkarâdyaiḥ
kiṃvā sitā-sahacaraiḥ kvathitaiś ca dugdhaiḥ /
dugdhâbdhilabdha-sudhayâpi na kiṃcid eva
yatrâbhinanda-sukaver vicaranti vācaḥ //

handsome, not drugged to stupor by pride in his own appeal").[62] He was endowed in particular with a strong imagination ("What treatises, though numerous, could cover King Hāravarṣa's very clever power of imagination?"),[63] and, more importantly, was an excellent judge of poetry, as the very first of these verses emphasizes ("Victorious are the rays [also 'feet'/'lines of poetry'] of the moon on earth, Śrī Hāravarṣa Yuvarāja, the consummate connoisseur: they have created the blossoming of the waterlily Abhinanda, which the combined rays of the twelve suns [of doomsday] will find difficult to undo").[64] Another verse speaks of him as simultaneously a poet and connoisseur, fit to sponsor a larger composition:[65] "One man now can best make manifest the excellence in wise men through his honoring them—the great poet Śrī Yuvarāja-deva, who knows how much effort it takes to complete a large composition."

The Yuvarāja appears to have noticed virtues in Abhinanda's poetry that earlier potential patrons had not understood: his support quickly banished the comments that were being spread by malicious men,[66] finally enabling Sarasvatī

62. After *sarga* 29 (p. 262):

nirmatsaraḥ kavir api prabhur apy avāmaḥ
kānto'py arūḍha-subhagatva-mada-pramīlaḥ /
atyugra-śaurya-rabhaso 'py akaṭhora-vādī
pṛthvī-patir jayati vikramaśīla-janmā //

63. Before *sarga* 31 (p. 271):

tyāgasya pātram iyam alpatarā trilokī
ko vikramasya kaṇikām api saṃsaheta /
śāstrāṇi kāni subahūny api hāravarṣa-
kṣoṇīpater atipaṭu-pratibhā-guṇasya //

64. After *sarga* 1 (p. 10) [also after *sarga* 6 (p. 55)]:

ete nikāma-rasikasya jayanti pādāḥ
śrī-hāravarṣa-yuvarāja-mahītalêndoḥ /
yair dvādaśârka-kiraṇôtkara-durnivāraḥ
sṛṣṭo 'bhinanda-kumudasya mahā-vikāsaḥ //

65. After *sarga* 20 (p. 178, first extra verse):

ekaḥ paraṃ saṃprati sat-kriyābhiḥ
manīṣiṣu vyākurute viśeṣam /
nibandha-nirvāha-pariśrama-jño
mahākavi-śrī-yuvarāja-devaḥ //

66. After *sarga* 8 (p. 72, first extra verse) [cf. the verse *dīpaḥ satāṃ* after *sarga* 11]:

vandyaḥ sutaḥ sa khalu rāma-parākramasya
yenâdya rāmacaritârpita-saṃmadena /
sadyaḥ prasāda-bhara-datta-mahāpratiṣṭhe
niṣṭhāpitaḥ piśuna-vāk-prasaro 'bhinande //

to wipe away the tears caused to flow by her having been improperly pushed away by heartless kings,[67] and making clear the poet's pathway, which adverse times had placed in darkness.

Several verses touch on the original nature of Abhinanda's poetry, and on how this had caused it to be rejected by less sensitive kings. One describes his patronage as a daring act:

> Of rulers who have minds made pure
> by a proper grasp of quality,
> Hāravarṣa alone now reigns supreme,
> since he has dared to scorn the view
> that innovation is a fault
> and has shown a liking
> for my poem on the life of Rāma.

In contrast, as another verse explains, the other kings, beasts that they were, and even the experts had rejected his poem, out of fear of "*suvipulârtha-vyaya*," the laying out either of very extensive meaning (on the part of the poet, whether in reference to the principles of style described in the following section, or simply to the great length of the poem), or of very extensive wealth (in reference to the large sums necessary for the proper financing of such a poem).

The extent of wealth expended by his patron is one of Abhinanda's favorite topics in these verses. He spent crores in arranging a body of fame for the poet, so as to establish that fame with unprecedented speed; he dispensed uncountable funds out of his love for the beauty of compositions; through his great work he brought the Kali Age to an end. The categories of expenditure are more interesting than the amounts: Hāravarṣa paid overtime wages to his scribes for the extra work involved in making written copies of the poem, and "established the *Rāmacarita* by filling all directions with books in quantities beyond my dreams." Yet he also spent lavishly in support of the oral presentation of the poem, and "did not count the expense of crores at each reciting of this *Rāmacarita*, as together with the audience he stammered in contemplation of each and every verse."

Abhinanda speaks also of his patron as being extremely captivated by even a small portion of the poem, and as the one who has been affectionate toward

67. After *sarga* 6 (p. 54, bottom of page):

> *ahṛdaya-mahīpālâsthāna-praṇoda-samudbhavo*
> *bhagavati cirād aśrûtpātaḥ sarasvati mṛjyatām /*
> *narapati-yuvā pṛthvīpālo nimajjati saṃprati*
> *tvayi param asau śeṣa-krīḍā-rase virasāyate //*

Abhinanda and can remove one's inner torment; thus when Abhinanda goes on to say that now that his verses are being discussed in front of Hāravarṣa "I am finally free of fear concerning my own verses, even in a meeting of a thousand poets," it seems likely that he is referring to some personal anxiety such as stage fright rather than simply to financial insecurity.

And there are suggestions that his attachment to the Yuvarāja goes even beyond their connection through poetry, as Abhinanda says that by meeting his patron not only his ears but also his eyes have been fulfilled.

His visual charms are listed in another verse:

> Where does the earth have a husband like Śrī Hāravarṣa,
> in all whose limbs the beauty of young manhood has blossomed:
> he is dark, and his eyes are long and white, with long black lashes,
> his belly is flat, and his chest is hard and lovely.

And the earth seems to be his only wife, since he "derives more pleasure from his love for master poets than a householder for grandchildren or for newly married brides." Night and day the wives of rival kings sneak away to visit him, who is uniquely attractive, but they come to enjoy the poetry.

Here the reference to lines of poetry involves a pun, as in the first of the added verses, on the feet of Yuvarājadeva, and it is not entirely clear whether the poetry referred to is that of the patron or of Abhinanda.

D.3. Patrons of the Past

Abhinanda seems to have valued the intellectual support of his patron as least as much as his financial support, judging from the verses in which he compares him with patrons of great poets in the past. He praises him as one who "following Hāla, has provided his own treasury to display the treasuries of (the verses) of poets" (or perhaps "to open up the buds of poets," although more likely this is a reference to the *Sattasaï* as an anthology), and also as one who like Vikramāditya could talk about poetry ("After the Śaka king's enemy, where are the poets of refined conversation? Like Yuvarāja, he was seen to be a king who was eager for poetry and the arts"). In the longer list given in another verse, Abhinanda adds King Harṣavardhana, who was himself a poet, and supplies the names of the great poets that each patron supported:

> Hāla doted on the excellent poet Śrī Pālita with utmost honoring;
> Vikramāditya brought the works of Kālidāsa to unprecedented fame;
> Śrī Harṣa bestowed the rewards of speech on the prose-poet Bāṇa;
> and Śrī Hāravarṣa unhesitatingly received Abhinanda with honor.

Here by Pālita he means the Jain poet Pādalipta or Pālitta, author of the oldest Prākrit prose novel, the *Taraṃgavaï*, and of verses preserved in the *Sattasaï* and in other anthologies.

The references to the Yuvarāja's expert enthusiasm do not seem to be mere flattery. In his *Udayasundarīkathā* Soḍḍhala (writing on the other side of India nearly two centuries later) records how Yuvarājadeva shared his seat with Abhinanda in appreciation of his poem, and in his added verses Abhinanda writes with a level of feeling reminiscent of his praises of Rājaśekhara (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1714), which Ingalls describes as having an "emotional intensity ... culminating on a personal note that is rare in Sanskrit literature."

In the list we have seen of three such poets—Pādalipta, Kālidāsa, and Bāṇa—we should note that while Abhinanda mentions Bāṇa as a predecessor he also mentions two earlier poets, and also that in naming Bāṇa he specifically refers to him as a prose poet, and finally that Pādalipta is not only a prose poet and a Prakrit poet but also a writer whose major work has a heavy narrative emphasis.

To this list we may add one more poeṭ. In two verses Abhinanda compares what his patron has done for him to what King Janamejaya did for Vyāsa. As in the other mentions of poets and their patrons, it is reasonable to regard both the patrons and the poets as models, and it is interesting, given the theme of the *Rāmacarita*, that Abhinanda looks to Vyāsa rather than Vālmīki in this connection.

E. Conclusion

Cumulatively these names suggest a rather ambitious aim for the *Rāmacarita*, one of recapturing the engaging directness of the *Mahābhārata* epic, the narrative density of the Jain novels, and the apparently simple yet deeply moving poetry of Kālidāsa, without abandoning the more sophisticated innovations of Bāṇa. The result would ideally contain the inventiveness and magnitude of meaning that Abhinanda has referred to, while also being, as he claims of his poetry in one verse, gracefully tender (*lalita-komala*). It would be a new way of combining the best features of the complex tradition of poetry he had inherited.

I suspect that the approaches to poetry that I have tried to point out in Abhinanda's work—the choice of a level of poetic language intermediate between the drab and the ornate, the use of boldly chosen and vigorously described details to give the reader a fresh and direct access to the emotional life of his characters, the constant attention to considerations of atmosphere and ambiance going far

beyond the usual inventories of *vibhāvas*—were selected in an attempt to pursue just this sort of combination of goals, as one gifted poet's response to his rich heritage of poetic possibilities. The question of how well he succeeded can be answered only by reading the poem.

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14

The Plays of Bhavabhūti*

Gary Tubb

Early on in what is apparently the first play composed by the seventh-century poet Bhavabhūti, the old Brahmin warrior Paraśurāma records his first impression of the young prince Rāma—the old avatar meeting the new one for the first time—in an astonished and verbally difficult aside:

> Amazing! This is a new mode altogether. And it's indescribable, the greatness and humaneness he has, based on some unrecognisable foundation, and this reliance on his own person, in a way that is deep in its boldness and vehemence![1]

The remark could as well serve to describe the striking arrival of Bhavabhūti as a poet, and may quite possibly have been intended to do so.[2] It also exemplifies some of what would become the best-known features of his style, including the repeated references to the mysteriousness of the inner workings of humans (*kam api, asaṃvijñāta, gambhīra*) and perhaps his fondness for the reworking of

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1. *Mahāvīracarita* 2.33/34: *āścaryam. anya evâyaṃ prakāraḥ. kim api câitad asaṃvijñāta-nibandhanaṃ māhātmyaṃ saujanyaṃ côtsāha-saṃrambha-gambhīraś ca pauruṣâvaṣṭambhaḥ.*

2. This is a possibility that appears more strongly in, or may perhaps have influenced the introduction of, the variant readings, including *-padanibandhanaṃ* for *-nibandhanaṃ*, which would refer explicitly to language.

abstract words:[3] while the straightforward meaning of *pauruṣa* is something like "manliness," "self-reliance," or "human effort," the literal etymological meaning of "personality" also comes to mind as a secondary meaning—a modern concept, perhaps, and one allegedly not found in other Sanskrit writers, but hardly beyond Bhavabhūti's range of interest and invention, given his intense interest in the inner life of humans and his willingness to push the boundaries of Sanskrit linguistic expression. Certainly no other Sanskrit poet has been singled out more often as having a distinct poetic personality of his own.

Yet within the tradition Bhavabhūti's innovations have been described as an extension in some way of the new approaches to poetry introduced a century or so earlier by Bāṇa, as we have seen, for example, in the verse by a Pāla poet referring to Bhavabhūti as one who took up again the path trod by Bāṇa:

> Bhavabhūti rediscovered it
> long after Bāṇa walked it every day.
> Kamalāyudha frequented it,
> and Keśaṭa traveled on it, too.
> Then Śrī Vākpatirāja graced its dust with his feet.
> That this road is still open to someone with real talent
> is our great good fortune.[4]

The list probably refers rather specifically to poets working together in a common movement based on Bāṇa's innovations, and associated with patronage in the same royal city with which Bāṇa himself had earlier been connected. Although Keśaṭa was a Pāla poet about whom little else is known,[5] Kalhaṇa and others describe Bhavabhūti and Vākpatirāja as having been contemporaries (with Vākpatirāja much the younger of the two) under the patronage of Yaśovarman in Kannauj, and Vākpatirāja himself gratefully describes Kamalāyudha as his teacher on topics of aesthetics and refers to Bhavabhūti in deferential terms as a powerful poetic presence.[6] What their work apparently had in common was the endeavour to expand the new style of poetry to other genres, which for Vākpatirāja involved the transferring of the virtues of Sanskrit prose poetry into the genre of

3. See Coulson 1981, 298, on Bhavabhūti's use of the unusual abstract *sumānuṣa*, with a meaning akin to what might be meant here.

4. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1733, translation from the introduction to the present volume:

> *unnīto bhavabhūtinā pratidinaṃ bāṇe gate yaḥ purā*
> *yaś cīrṇaḥ kamalâyudhena suciraṃ yenâgamat keśaṭaḥ/*
> *yaḥ śrī-vākpati-rāja-pāda-rajasāṃ samparka-pūtaś ciraṃ*
> *diṣṭyā ślāgha-guṇasya kasyacid asau mārgaḥ samunmīlati//*

5. See Warder 1994, 4.413 (§ 2457) on Keśaṭa as a member of Bhavabhūti's "group."

6. *Gaüḍavaho* 798 on Kamalāyudha and 799 on Bhavabhūti.

the long Prakrit poem,[7] and for Bhavabhūti a reinvigoration of the Sanskrit stage play. This is a view of Bhavabhūti endorsed by Renou and others, who have described his special accomplishment as the incorporation into Sanskrit plays of the learned and more ornate style of poetry that had already been developed in Sanskrit lyric verse.[8]

This combination, of lyrical poetic power and new approaches to the Sanskrit play, accords well with the two claims to fame mentioned by Bhavabhūti in his first reference to himself at the start of his earliest play, which says of the work that "the text is from a poet who has language under his control, and the story is the famous one about Rāma."[9] It is in these two areas, of poetic language and of the construction of plays, that my remarks on aspects of boldness in Bhavabhūti will be made.

The importance placed by Bhavabhūti on his bringing the Rāma story to the Sanskrit stage is seen again at the end of his surviving corpus, in the final verse of his last play *Uttararāmacarita*, which Pollock has seen as claiming "that it is the first formal drama based on Valmiki's poem," pointing out that no unequivocally earlier examples of such plays exist.[10] Bhavabhūti's significance in presenting anew the story first told by Vālmīki is mentioned in yet another of the verses by Sanskrit poets about Sanskrit poets, this time by Rājaśekhara, an important figure in a later round of innovations in the poetic circles of Kannauj, who in his own play about Rāma places himself in a line of incarnations:

> At the beginning was the poet Vālmīki,
> who then was born on earth as Bhartṛmeṇṭha,
> and who reappeared in the form of Bhavabhūti.
> He now exists as Rājaśekhara.[11]

The verse suggests that the poet intervening chronologically between Vālmīki and Bhavabhūti, presumably the famous Bhartṛmeṇṭha who worked in Ujjain and Kashmir in the early fifth century, may himself have written a play, or at least an important poetic work of some kind, dealing with the Rāma story. The question of whether Bhavabhūti was the first to compose a Rāma play is

7. See Warder 1994, 4.407 (§ 2442) on the similarity of Vākpatirāja's long *kulaka* sequences of Prakrit verses to the Sanskrit prose of the *ākhyāyikās*.

8. Renou 1947, 283 (§ 1882).

9. *Mahāvīracarita* 1.4ab: *vaśya-vacaḥ kaver vākyaṃ sā ca rāmâśrayā kathā.*

10. Pollock 2007, 30.

11. *Bālarāmāyaṇa* 1.16, also *Bālabhārata* 1.12, and *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1719 (with the reading *bhartṛmeṭhatām*):

> *babhūva valmīka-bhavaḥ purā kavis tataḥ prapede bhuvi bhartṛmeṇṭhatām/*
> *punaḥ sthito yo bhavabhūti-rekhayā sa vartate saṃprati rājaśekharaḥ//*

thus difficult to answer in view of how much Sanskrit poetry of importance has been lost—a situation for which Bhartṛmeṇṭha is a particularly good example. His long poem *Hayagrīvavadha* was one of the most esteemed of all Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s and was cited with admiration in works of poetics over a period of many centuries. And he figures in other accounts of the most important poets, including the chronological list of ten names given by Soḍḍhala in the eleventh century,[12] where Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, Vākpatirāja, and Rājaśekhara also appear. But now all that remains of the *Hayagrīvavadha* are those scattered citations, and if Bhartṛmeṇṭha also wrote something dealing with the story of Rāma, we do not even know whether it was a play or a work of some other genre.

A. Bhavabhūti's Distinctive Use of Language

I have mentioned in other essays in this volume that one of our most importance sources of verses that would otherwise be lost is the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* of Vidyākara, the oldest surviving anthology of Sanskrit verses, and one in which Bhavabhūti is a particular favourite, being Vidyākara's third most frequently quoted author (behind only Rājaśekhara and Murāri). The very name of the collection may, in fact, have been taken from Bhavabhūti's play *Mālatīmādhava*, where at one point (at 8.4/5) the hero Mādhava remarks to himself in admiration of the eloquence of a Buddhist nun, *aho Bhagavatī-pradhānântevāsinyāḥ sarvato-mukhaṃ vaidagdhyam, akṣayaḥ subhāṣita-ratna-koṣaḥ*, "Oh, how versatile is the cleverness of the Mother Superior's chief pupil, an inexhaustible storehouse of fine expressions." It is in that anthology that we find a verse from an anonymous Pāla poet, already translated and discussed at some length in the Introduction to this volume, which ends with a line expressing special pleasure in the poetry of Bhavabhūti and at the same time supplying a little parody of his distinctive style:

tathâpy antar-modaṃ kam api bhavabhūtir vitanute

But we can't name the delight that Bhavabhūti
spreads inside us.[13]

The interest in inner emotion addressed here, and the idea of its being indescribable, are features of Bhavabhūti's poetry that we have also seen exemplified in the remarks of Paraśurāma quoted earlier from the *Mahāvīracarita*. These same features, and others relevant to Bhavabhūti's distinctive use of language, appear throughout the scene of Paraśurāma's confrontation with Rāma. Here

12. The list consists of Vyāsa, Vālmīki, Guṇāḍhya, Bhartṛmeṇṭha, Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, Vākpatirāja, Abhinanda, Rājaśekhara; see footnote 15 in Chapter 13.

13. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1698d; see Introduction, p. 7.

I will mention only one further passage, which has often been commented on with reference to how difficult Bhavabhūti's passages on emotion can be to understand. As the scene in the second act of the *Mahāvīracarita* proceeds, it is clear that Paraśurāma feels conflicted by his admiration for young Rāma, since he simultaneously wishes to kill Rāma, both because of his general enmity toward the Kṣatriya class and because he feels Rāma has insulted his teacher, the god Śiva, by breaking his bow in the contest at which Rāma won Sītā as his bride. Finally Rāma asks him why he is weeping, and Paraśurāma begins his reply by saying this about Rāma:

> All joys seems to join together and reach a higher level in my heart.
> When you descend into my view, the festival for my eyes produces rapture.[14]

In commenting on these lines as quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, Daniel Ingalls explains (drawing on remarks by Sanskrit commentators) that the first line refers to "the sentimental or spiritual effect" of the beauty being mentioned, and the second line to the physical effect. He goes on to say:

> Much has been written in an attempt to give a precise meaning to the first line; cf. especially Vīrarāghava on *Mahāvīracarita* 2.45; but I doubt that it has a really precise meaning. Bhavabhūti frequently sacrifices precision to fervor.[15]

The lengthy remarks of the commentator mentioned here attempt to unfold the meaning of the first line through quotations of several Upaniṣadic and Vedāntic texts, with special emphasis on the theory of *bhūmans* or levels in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, culminating in the claim that in the speech of Paraśurāma the poet has revealed "the highest secret of all the Upaniṣads" (*akhila-vedānta-parama-rahasyârthaḥ)*. This interpretation is not entirely unlikely, given the extent to which the contents of the play undoubtedly make reference to philosophical and other brahmanical texts.

For our purposes the comment by Ingalls is relevant both to the area of Bhavabhūti's poetic language—where it raises the question of whether the poet is in fact often imprecise in describing emotion, and, less directly, the question of the role of philosophical concerns in his poetic practice—and to his approach to writing stage plays specifically. The latter question arises because of the fact that the anthology verse actually being commented on by Ingalls is drawn not

14. *Mahāvīracarita* 2.45ab (also *Mālatīmadhava* 5.9ab, from which I have used Coulson's version, and *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 775):

> *saṃbhūyêva sukhāni cetasi paraṃ bhūmānam ātanvate*
> *yatrâloka-pathâvatāriṇi ratiṃ prastauti netrôtsavaḥ/*

15. Ingalls 1965, 521, on verse 775ab.

from the *Mahāvīracarita* but from another play by Bhavabhūti, the *Mālatīmādhava*, where the lines refer not to the sight of Rāma but to the hero Mādhava's recollection of the face of the woman he loves, which is furthermore not a memory that he entertains in a moment of pleasant repose, but a thought that comes upon him as he is prowling the hideous grounds of a cremation site. The great differences in tone between the two plays, and the reasons why Bhavabhūti would have found the same lines appropriate in both settings, are thus further topics of interest in connection with the theme of his poetic boldness.

As for the first question, that of the contention that Bhavabhūti frequently sacrifices precision in the interest of fervor, it should be noted that the opinion of Ingalls is at odds with that of David Shulman, who has found our poet capable of composing a play (the *Uttararāmacarita*) that he considers a "work of remarkable lyrical precision."[16] I suspect that in many instances where Bhavabhūti's work seems unclear, the problem is largely one of his attempting to say something that has not been said before in Sanskrit. I would add that where the literal meaning of his words is clear, it is very often the case that the meaning is one of denying that the internal experience of humans is capable of being pinned down precisely.

Such a denial is typically carried out by Bhavabhūti using one of several noticeable verbal devices. The simplest is the use of an indefinite pronoun such as *kiṃcid* or *kamapi*, of which we have already seen several examples. Another is a list of alternatives, often connected by the particle *vā* ("or"), and a third is the juxtaposition of two verbs of different meaning connected by the conjunctions *ca* ... *ca* ("both ... and").

An example of a long list of alternatives is available in the continuation of the passage beginning with the verse about all joys coming together, which in the version used in the *Mālatimādhava* is part of a description by Mādhava of the face of his beloved Mālatī. He follows that verse by admitting that he can no longer tell any difference between his memories of her and his actual perceptions, so that his consciousness takes on her very form. Precisely what this involves, however, cannot be conveyed by any single poetic fancy:

> My darling is absorbed into my mind,
> as if reflected, as if painted, and as if sculpted,
> as if inset, as if cemented, and as if engraved,
> as if nailed there by the Love God's five arrows,
> as if tightly sewn in place by the network of my flow of thoughts.[17]

16. Shulman 2001, 256.

17. *Mālatīmādhava* 5.10:
līnêva pratibimbitêva likhitêvôtkīrṇa-rūpêva ca
pratyuptêva ca vajra-lepa-ghaṭitêvântarnikhātêva ca/

Perhaps the most famous of such lists is a verse in the *Uttararāmacarita* spoken by Rāma to Sītā:

> It is impossible to determine whether it is pleasure or pain,
> delusion or sleep, or spread of poison, or intoxication.
> Each time you touch me, a transformation muddles my senses,
> and causes my consciousness both to reel and to close up.[18]

The last line of the verse also illustrates the final device I have mentioned, that of joining contrasting verbs with "both ... and," and also illustrates Bhavabhūti's favorite metrical location for such a construction, at the end of a verse in the *śikhariṇī* meter. If one takes, for example, the first half dozen instances of *śikhariṇī* verses in his *Mālatīmādhava*, one will find this same syntax in the final line of every one of the six verses, and as often as not with a similar sort of contrast. Thus in 2.3d, the speaker mentions opposing mental results in describing the effect of seeing the heroine wasting away with lovesickness:

iyaṃ naḥ kalyāṇī ramayati manaḥ kampayati ca

This lovely girl both gladdens my mind and frightens it.

And while here both effects may be felt unambiguously by the clear-minded Buddhist nun who is speaking, in a more extensive example a bit earlier on, the context of mental indecision is once again made explicit. When Mādhava attempts to describe to his friend the effect of his first sight of Mālatī, we hear once again of a transformation that is not susceptible to clear determination and is beyond the reach of all words, never before experienced in this lifetime:

vikāraḥ ko 'py antar jaḍayati ca tāpaṃ ca kurute

a transformation that both deadens me inside and sets me on fire. (1.30d)

He continues in the next verse by saying that he cannot discriminate what is right in front of him, or remember accurately things experienced many times before:

mano niṣṭhā-śūnyaṃ bhramati ca kim apy ālikhati ca

My mind both wanders aimlessly and pictures a certain thing. (1.31d)

sā naś cetasi kīlitêva viśikhaiś ceto-bhuvaḥ pañcabhiś
cintā-saṃtati-tantu-jāla-nibiḍa-syūtêva lagnā priyā//

18. *Uttararāmacarita* 1.36:
viniścetuṃ śakyo na sukham iti vā duḥkham iti vā
pramoho nidrā vā kim u viṣa-visarpaḥ kim u madaḥ/
tava sparśe sparśe mama hi parimūḍhêndriya-gaṇo
vikāraś caitanyaṃ bhramayati ca saṃmīlayati ca//

In both of these verses, notice also the repetition of the concept of clear determination (*pariccheda*) and the use of indefinite pronouns (*ko 'pi, kim api*).

Given Bhavabhūti's evident interest in formal philosophy, which in Sanskrit is often associated with a highly nominal style, his fondness for using verbs to express such complications of experience is intriguing. The choice may indeed have a philosophical basis, if it reflects his allegiance, observable in many places throughout the plays, to those systems of metaphysics that view phenomenal reality as constituted through dynamic processes of transformation, whether in the Sāṃkhya understanding of such processes (*pariṇāma*),[19] in the Vedānta view (*vivarta*) in which the transformations are ultimately unreal, or in the related view of the grammarians in which they spring from a foundation of language, a topic touched on in Bhavabhūti's final play both at its beginning (in a verse describing how reality conforms to the words of the primeval sages) and at its end (in its reference to the poet as a knower of the *śabda-brahma*).

The verses in *śikhariṇī* meter are also of some use in connection with the other large topic of interest here, that of Bhavabhūti's approach to stagecraft, and the related question of the order in which he composed his three plays. Many of the peculiarities that have been noticed in Bhavabhūti, including some metrical practices, can be found throughout his plays and cannot survive as evidence for their chronology. Among them are tendencies that are probably connected with his project of applying, in a rather serious, brahmanically intellectual way, the learned style of Sanskrit poetry to the genre of plays. Examples are his reluctance to make much use of the historically Prakrit meters, such as Āryā and Gīti, and his complete refusal to compose verses in Prakrit; when the Prakrit-speaking women in his plays turn to verse they switch to Sanskrit, and in his *Uttararāmacarita* seven of the ten prominent female characters are speakers of Sanskrit to begin with. Also conspicuous is his failure to include the figure of the *vidūṣaka* or court clown in any of his plays; this peculiarity is often mentioned in connection with a perceived tone of seriousness sometimes including the allegation that Bhavabhūti had no sense of humor, a claim that Anundoram Borooah accepted and felt was much to Bhavabhūti's credit,[20] but which Michael Coulson indignantly denied.[21]

Other features, however—including Bhavabhūti's use of highly dramatic forms of stagecraft, his tendency to employ the technical terminology of dramaturgy

19. A term whose uses in the *Uttararāmacarita* are explored eloquently in Shulman 2001.

20. Borooah 1877, 54, "It is, however, I believe, universally true that the more deeply a man feels, the more prone he is to look at facts and the less able to humour or jest."

21. Coulson 1981, 296, "... and I doubt whether the charge (levelled with monotonous regularity) that Bhavabhūti lacks a sense of humour would survive a stage performance of Act VII [of the *Mālatīmādhava*]."

within the plays themselves, and his preferences both for particular Sanskrit meters and for the relative density of verse as opposed to prose—appear to involve areas in which his practices differ from play to play, and suggest, with useful results, a particular sequence in the composition of his three plays.

B. Constructive Progress in the Sequence of the Plays

There has long been widespread agreement on the most probable order in which the three surviving plays were composed: first, the *Mahāvīracarita*, or "Life of the Great Hero (Rāma)"; second, the *Mālatīmādhava*, or "Mālatī and Mādhava," which unlike the other two is not a *nāṭaka* but a *prakaraṇa*, that is, a play with an invented plot; and finally his greatest play, the *Uttararāmacarita*, or "Later Life of Rāma," dealing with the life of Rāma and Sītā after the return from Laṅkā.

Many types of evidence point to this sequence. A simple and circumstantial one is the amount of autobiographical information the poet feels it necessary to provide at the start of each play: much in the first, less in the second, very little in the third.

Further evidence can be found in the progressive development in his use of specific poetic features. One example out of many is the growth of Bhavabhūti's preference for the difficult *śikhariṇī* meter, which he uses to famously great effect in the *Uttararāmacarita*. This meter is fourth in frequency in the first play, in third place in the middle play, and second only to *anuṣṭubh* in the final play. A similar phenomenon is the growing preference for verse over prose, from the use of tediously long prose passages in the first play to the situation in the *Uttararāmacarita*, which consists largely of verses. Closely related to this is Bhavabhūti's exceptional fondness for repeating himself by re-using verses from play to play, and here too the *Uttararāmacarita* stands out as the culmination of the process, since it not only contains more verses than the other plays in total, but also contains every verse which appears in its full form in more than one of the plays.

Our estimation of the order of the plays based on this and other evidence is complicated, but not overturned, by the likelihood that Bhavabhūti continued to rewrite portions of his plays, presumably in response to their reception, as has been argued by scholars from S. K. Belvalkar to Michael Coulson.[22] In commenting on some features in these plays which seem in this way to reflect, or even to refer to, reactions of others to the performance of the plays, my remarks will obviously be speculative, since we have no direct evidence whatever on their performance. Nevertheless, the openings of the plays do point to Bhavabhūti's

22. Coulson 1989, xxx–xli.

having been attentive to both actors (to whom, he assures us more than once, he is a friend) and critics (to whom his feelings are apparently not quite as cordial), and presumably the reactions to the plays had an impact not only on whatever rewriting he might have done, but also in a larger way on the original composition of each succeeding play.

The most famous reference in the plays to critics is a verse in the prelude to the *Mālatīmādhava*, which we have translated in the introduction to this volume:

> Those who scorn me now
> know what they know.
> My work is not for them.
> But someday someone will be born
> who shares my nature, for time
> is boundless and the world is wide. [23]

Now, if the scorn referrred to was in reaction to Bhavabhūti's first play, the *Mahāvīracarita*, it is not difficult to guess some of the things that might have provoked it, for that is a play with special problems.

One problem is connected with the fact that in the available manuscripts the play has multiple and widely different endings, a situation that I believe points to difficulties in the way the play is conceived. The *Mahāvīracarita* deals with the early portion of Rāma's life—how much of his life, it is impossible to say without knowing whether the play is complete. But as it stands in the five published acts, it comes up to the point at which Vālin has been killed. It does not, however, tell the main parts of the story directly; in fact it does just the opposite. The play is designed, not to present to us the big events—such as the abduction of Sītā, or the breaking of Śiva's bow—but to tell us about the background to those things, so that those actual events, in a very odd way, are skipped over in the play, and are merely referred to in passing, as having happened in the interim. What is presented in the foreground is the political setting of these events, handled in a way much like the treatment of the political maneuverings described in the *Mudrārākṣasa*, where the great Brahmin minister Cāṇakya manipulates everything behind the scenes in order to bring about a desired end.

In Bhavabhūti's play the Brahmin minister is not on the good side but on the bad side—he is Mālyavān, the grandfather of Rāvaṇa, demon king of Laṅkā. And his political wheelings and dealings, unlike those of Cāṇakya, meet with

23. *Mālatīmādhava* 1.6:

> *ye nāma ke cid iha naḥ prathayanty avajñaṃ*
> *jānanti te kim api—tān prati nâiṣa yatnaḥ/*
> *utpatsyate tu mama ko 'pi samāna-dharmā*
> *kālo hy ayaṃ niravadhir, vipulā ca pṛthvī//*

failure at every important turn, so that rather than being a political play the *Mahāvīracarita* is really a sort of political counter-play. It describes things that didn't work. But the effect of focusing on them and describing them is to remove from the story of the good guy, Rāṃa, any guilt for any of the dubious things that he does, all of which become, in Bhavabhūti's revised version of the story, the result of schemes on the part of Mālyavān.

One major scheme is his attempt to have Rāma killed by Paraśurāma. From Mālyavān's point of view this seems like a good plan for several reasons, but it fails in the end. Another is the attempt to have Vālin kill Rāma, which again seems promising but which not only fails in his aim but also serves to make Rāma's killing of Vālin appear unavoidable rather than treacherous.

I suspect that Bhavabhūti meant to end the play at this point, since the subsequent actions of Rāma through the end of the war are ethically straightforward and require no such special treatment. The manuscripts of the play diverge at this point into more than one version of the ending, and although it is not clear which if any of these versions are by Bhavabhūti himself, what is clear is that the sort of counter-play I have described is a difficult thing to end. Certainly the ending of the fifth act as printed does not appear to fit in the scheme of the play as I have understood it. And other features of the printed continuation, including differences in style and abrupt differences in the very large cast of characters, make it unlikely that we have before us the work of Bhavabhūti.

How the audience reacted to the original version of the play is something we can only guess. It may be worth noting that Bhavabhūti's apparent patron, King Yaśovarman of Kannauj, wrote a Rāma play of his own, at the start of which he announces quite pointedly that he is not going to tamper with the plot of the Rāma story but will tell it the way it was originally told by Vālmīki, a declaration even more to the point if, as has been suggested, Bhavabhūti had been the first to attempt to tell the story in the form of a Sanskrit play.

Another obvious problem in the play is that it is filled almost entirely with talking heads—intellectual males discussing theoretical problems through the use of Brahmin texts, with an emphasis not only on the *Arthaśāstra* associated with the aforementioned Cāṇakya, but also the *Āpastambagṛhyaśūtra*, which as a text of Bhavabhūti's own Vedic *caraṇa* was clearly of importance to him personally but which, to be frank about it, is not known for its edge-of-the-seat dramatic intensity. The resulting play is one that many people must have found boring, and no doubt some of them mentioned this.

That this problem was made known to Bhavabhūti is very strongly suggested by the fact that at the start of his *Mālatīmādhava* the verse about his having been misunderstood is followed immediately by a verse conceding the inadvisability of basing a play on references to the reading list of a Brahmin graduate student

in philosophy (although even in this second play the hero is described as being just such a person):

> As for study of the Vedas, and knowledge of the Upaniṣads, of
> Sāṃkhya and Yoga,
> why proclaim them? For this produces nothing good in a play.
> It is boldness and nobility of language, and depth of meaning,
> that by their presence convey the existence of learning and cleverness.[24]

The verse should not be read, however, as merely a grudging concession to criticism. It records a breakthrough in Bhavabhūti's understanding of how he might most effectively achieve his goal of incorporating the insights of the philosophical traditions he mentions into the world of the Sanskrit play and that of its audiences. That breakthrough was made possible by the risks successfully taken earlier by Bāṇa and others, and was of vital importance not only to the development of Bhavabhūti's career as a poet but also to that of the subsequent history of Sanskrit poetry, a topic to which I shall return at the end of this essay.

The problem addressed in the verse was rectified with a vengeance in the next play, the *Mālatīmādhava*, which more than any other Sanskrit play is chock-full of spectacular dramatic action. It builds on, but greatly adds to, a few devices that appear in very strangely tentative form in the first play. These include the hero's fainting spells and Bhavabhūti's trademark references to gut wrenching (*marmaccheda*). In the fifth act of the *Mahāvīracarita*, for example, after Sītā has been abducted and Rāma finally appears on stage, Rāma does mention in his very first verse something about his vitals being shredded (*marmāṇi cchinatti*), but this is not developed to the level that will appear in the other plays. Similarly, later in the same act Rama actually does manage to faint, but again in a kind of curiously preliminary way. When Rāma falls to the floor in the *Mahāvīracarita*, the other characters somehow don't notice it—they go on talking, and even Rāma himself, when his turn next comes around in the discussion, is back on his feet speaking his lines as if nothing had happened.

One can imagine the advice Bhavabhūti might have received from friends who saw the first performance of the play. But whatever might have prompted him, it is clear in the *Mālatīmādhava* that Bhavabhūti had become determined

24. *Mālatīmādhava* 1.7:

> *yad vedâdhyananaṃ tathôpaniṣadāṃ sāṃkhyasya yogasya ca*
> *jñānaṃ, tat-kathanena kiṃ, na hi tataḥ kaś cid guṇo nāṭake/*
> *yat prauḍhatvam udāratā ca vacasāṃ yac cârthato gauravaṃ*
> *tac ced asti tatas tad eva gamakaṃ pāṇḍitya-vaidagdhyayoḥ//*

to try every possible device that one could put in a play to make it more interesting. The play gives attention to the most lurid of *rasa*s in combinations that are notorious for their supposed impropriety,[25] and beyond this it includes an astonishingly wide array of gripping bits of stage play that are a world apart from the political discussions of the first play; many of these devices appear here for the first time or are brought here to an unprecedented level of intensity.

As a single example of this new liveliness, consider the frenzied juxtaposition in Acts 9 and 10 of the device of fainting with the equally dramatic one of depicting characters as standing ready to jump off the edge of a cliff. At one point in the ninth act the hero Mādhava, who has fainted once again, regains consciousness long enough to send off a cloud messenger (a device that was already a proven crowd-pleaser, of course), then faints again, reviving long enough to deal with an elephant (a topic I return to shortly), only to faint again. At this point his friend, who cannot detect breathing in Mādhava, gives him up for dead and goes off to the edge of a cliff, but is saved just before jumping by a *siddha* who comes flying in.

As the next act then begins, the mood intensifies. One of the women now faints, and before we get too far into the act, all of the women who are left on their feet are standing on the edge of a different cliff, getting ready to jump, when Mādhava's friend, having been saved from his own cliff, comes and stops them, and after some excited dialogue we have learned that all of the people who are not on stage are either on the verge of killing themselves or flat on the floor—Mālatī's father is about to jump into a fire, and the king and his minister are stretched out on the ground trying to talk him out of it. At this point, Mālatī and Mādhava come on stage, with Mādhava carrying Mālatī because she is now unconscious. Shortly thereafter everybody on stage falls unconscious at the same time, so that there are all together half a dozen persons littering the stage. And then they all revive.

Clearly there has been an escalation in Bhavabhūti's dramatic approach. Just as clearly this escalation is continued in his next play, the *Uttararāmacarita*, together with something more. In that play, this and other sorts of intensity are not only escalated but focused, so that an even more powerful arsenal of dramatic techniques is used to even more profound effect. And once again the poet builds on devices introduced more tentatively in the preceding play.

A good example is the scene in the third act of the *Uttararāmacarita* in which Sītā is invisible to Rāma although she can see him. In this condition they

25. Ingalls 1965, 14–15: "It is expressly forbidden to combine the erotic with the horrid, but this rule has been broken. Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* combines sex and horror in a fashion that was later never imitated, it is true, but neither was it forgotten."

are both talking about the same things, so that the device of a double-speaking verse—which in the *Mālatīmādhava* had been used in simpler situations in which two characters simultaneously use the same words for their separate purposes—is expanded into a whole act, where once again two persons are talking about the same thing but with only one of them fully realizing that this is happening. In the *Uttararāmacarita* this is developed into a scene that is perhaps the most intense in Sanskrit literature.[26] But Bhavabhūti's first use of the invisibility motif, in the *Mālatīmādhava*, had been much more tentative.

It occurs at one of the moments where the heroine, Mālatī, has fainted. While she is lying on the ground, Mādhava switches places with her girlfriend, and when she gets up, her eyes are filled with tears, and so she can't see that it is Mādhava. At that point we get a special kind of pair of double-speaking verses (6.10–11) composed so as to work both as Sanskrit and as Prakrit (Bhavabhūti wrote no verses that are only Prakrit). It is thus possible for Mālatī to think that Mādhava is a woman even when his speech is not in prose. Only gradually do her eyes clear so that she sees who he is.

This little bit of stage play is one that Bhavabhūti picked up on later. First, the idea of not being able to see because of tears is later described in the *Mālatīmādhava* in a verse (9.14) that he then re-uses in the *Uttararāmacarita* (1.31)—a practice I will say more about shortly. In the verse he talks about what happens between the time when one's eyes have emptied of their tears and the time they have filled up with new ones; Bhavabhūti views such an interlude as a rare opportunity in human life, and a valuable one, in which one might be able to glimpse something important if one pays attention before the tears sweep back in again. Second, within the *Mālatīmādhava* itself Bhavabhūti returns to this idea of doubling through a hidden identity, in a wonderful scene later where, in order to prevent Mālatī from actually being married to someone other than Mādhava, his friend Makaranda dresses up as a woman and shows up for the wedding. This leads to all sorts of hilarious and interesting things, one of which is a very long scene in which Makaranada is lying in bed under the covers, and the woman that he himself is in love with, thinking that he is Mālatī, talks about her love for him. It is, in retrospect, a kind of preview of the much more intense scene in the *Uttararāmacarita*, where Sītā can see Rāma but Rāma cannot see her.

The phenomenon of re-using verses from an earlier play is important for several reasons. One is that it provides especially strong evidence that the *Uttararāmacarita* is the last of the plays, because, as I have mentioned, in every one of the dozens of instances of entire verses that occur in more than one play

26. Shulman 2001, 261–63.

the *Uttararāmacarita* is always involved, and it becomes clear that Bhavabhūti has a project of fitting the greatest hits of his first two plays into the grander scheme of his last one. Here I would like to comment on only two special aspects of such verses—first, that the reusing of these verses seems to be based not simply on Bhavabhūti's personal preferences but on the success of particular verses in performance, as seen in the instances in which Bhavabhūti appears to hint at the audience's own memory of the earlier plays, and second, that this sort of reference to things outside the play—something sometimes referred to nowadays as "breaking the fourth wall"—occurs also in Bhavabhūti's frequent and deliberate blurring of the boundaries between dramatic presentation and real life.

Examples of all these things can be found in the appearance, which I have already briefly mentioned, of the elephant in the ninth act of the *Mālatīmādhava*. This creature, and the basic setup of the scene in which he appears, are already borrowed from Kālidāsa's play *Vikramorvaśīya*, and will be used yet again in a more intense form in the third act of the *Uttararāmacarita*. In all three plays it is a scene in which the hero, tormented by the absence of the woman he loves, has gone mad and is crashing through the bushes bemoaning their separation, and in this frenzied state starts looking at the animals of the forest and at how they are all having the pleasure of interacting with their mates.

In the *Mālatīmādhava* version of this, the verse in question is one in which Mādhava criticizes the elephant by saying that although it has learned some things about how to treat the female that it loves, it hasn't done it completely right. The verse (9.34, *līlôtkhāta-mṛṇāla-kāṇḍa-kavala-cchedeṣu saṃpāditāḥ...*) is one that is reused in the *Uttararāmacarita* with minor revisions that, as Coulson has explained,[27] point in themselves to the *Uttararāmacarita* version being the later one, and which also now refer to the elephant as having learned its lesson. In the *Uttararāmacarita* it is Rāma who speaks the verse, introducing it with the words "Look at how he's grown." Internally this remark is explained by a description of the elephant as having been adopted by Rāma and Sītā 12 years earlier, but beyond this, as comments by Coulson imply if I understand them correctly,[28] Bhavabhūti is also appealing to the previous experience of the audience,

27. Coulson 1989, 273–74.

28. Coulson 1989, 274: It may also be noted that Bhavabhūti was writing for an audience which knew his earlier play. His fondness for echoing his own lines is not haphazard, still less does it betray a paucity of imagination. It is intended to form a nostalgic bond between himself and his audience. ... In other words, the young elephant has matured in wisdom (and so, by dhvani he suggests, have you and I). Cf. Coulson 1981, 296: "His plays are full of echoes of one another, and although the matter awaits further study, it seems certain that sometimes at least these are intended to awaken echoes in his audience's mind."

who will have remembered seeing the elephant in the earlier play—perhaps 12 years earlier—and who will marvel at the even more intense setting in which the elephant and the verse about him are now deployed.

C. The Intermingling of Aesthetic Theory and Emotional Description

In the *Mālatīmādhava* the verse is also notable for the way in which it leads into some of Bhavabhūti's more interesting intermingling of dramaturgical terminology with the description of real-life emotion. He eases into this by having Mādhava, immediately after this verse, refer to the elephant as reacting by walking away in a manner that is, as he puts it, "without *rasa*," but what follows is more interesting. Mādhava goes on to say that he himself must really have gone mad, since he is speaking to this wild animal the way that he would speak to his friend, Makaranda. And in this madness he begins to think that Makaranda has left him too, even though his friend is standing right there beside him. He then addresses his supposedly absent friend with a verse (9.35) beginning as follows:

dhig ucchvasita-vaiśasaṃ mama yad ittham ekākinaḥ,

To hell with this treachery of mine, of continuing to breathe though left alone like this.

The second line of the verse is the one that interests me:

dhig eva ramaṇīyatāṃ tvad-anubhāva-bhāvād ṛte

To hell for sure with beauty, without the experience of your reaction to the experience.

Or, perhaps more literally, "without my having the emotion that results from your symptoms of experiencing (that beauty)." That is, what is the use of my being exposed to anything enjoyable if you are not here for me to share the experience with? The idea is then repeated in the second half of the verse, but expanded to include Mālatī, whom he has now remembered, as he reveals in rather fitful syntax:

tvayā saha na yas tayā ca divaso 'pi sa dhvaṃsatām
pramoda-mṛgatṛṣṇikāṃ dhig aparatra yā jāyate

Let that day that occurs without you disappear—and without her;
to hell with that mirage of joy that arises anywhere else
[or, his choice of words suggests, "without another"].

This particular form of joy, *pramoda* with the qualification specified here, will still be on the poet's mind at the very end of the play, where he refers to it

once again in the final line of the *Mālatīmādhava* (10.25d) using it to conclude the *bharatavākya* or closing wish, through which a playwright endeavors to direct the merit or ritual power of the play's performance into a particular benediction for the benefit of the audience or public in general:

modantāṃ ghana-baddha-bāndhava-suhṛd-goṣṭhī-pramodāḥ prajāḥ

May the people be happy, with the happiness of the company of friends
whose bonds of friendship are tightly bound.

Curiously, exactly the same words form the final line of a well-known play from a century earlier, the *Nāgānanda* (5.39d), attributed to Bāṇa's royal patron Harṣa. That play was clearly a favorite of Bhavabhūti's, and he takes from it a number of specific devices, such as that of the Buddhist nun reviving an unconscious person by sprinkling water, and also other turns of phrasing. Furthermore, he must have been interested in the issues raised by its philosophical contents and its use of the *śāntarasa* or mood of peace as its principal mood, a choice for which it is the best-known example. But it is not clear whether Bhavabhūti took this line from it as a sort of homage either to a play he admired or to the history of literary patronage by rulers in Kannauj, or as a way of identifying himself with the poetic project of Bāṇa and his patron, or simply because the line said what he wanted to say in closing. I suspect that part of the appeal of the line was the opportunity to enjoy another instance of pregnant interpretation of an abstract, along the lines of my remark on the word *pauruṣa* at the beginning of this essay: here I suppose that while Harṣa had used the word as an ordinary noun, so that *bāndhava-suhṛd* would mean simply "family and friends," Bhavabhūti thought of *bāndhava* as an abstract, referring to what it really means to be a friend, so that *bāndhava-suhṛd* refers instead to "friends whose friendship" is of the sort specified here, closely tied, that is to say, with the reliability and intensity that he spoke of in the passage we examined earlier.

What I really wish to emphasize, however, in that earlier remark by Mādhava on sharing joy with his friend is that the terms he uses are quite clearly technical terms of dramaturgical aesthetic theory—*bhāva* and *anubhāva*, and in the prose before the verse, *rasa* as well—which in the classical theory are said to have special names of their own precisely because they are not the same as real-life emotions. In fact the word *ramaṇīyatā* or beauty is also a technical term of aesthetics in the treatises of later writers such as Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja at the beginning of his *Rasagaṅgādhara*, and probably in Bhavabhūti's mind as well.

This blurring of the distinctions between drama and life, for which many other examples can be found in Bhavabhūti's plays, carries its own form of intensity, and some of the issues it raises may well have remained active in the memory of the audience that saw the reappearance of the elephant in the *Uttararāmacarita*,

where they are directly relevant to the interaction between the invisible Sītā and the raving Rāma. As she listens to him she makes it explicitly clear that she realizes Rāma is talking about their child. Rāma does not know that they actually do have sons, but he is talking about the elephant as if it were their son, and he gives her a chance to hear how he would talk about their son, and how he would do so in connection with an awareness of how one should treat the woman he loves; Sītā hears all of this and reacts in a way that Rāma is not consciously aware of, but that he feels in some mysterious way. The scene is one of layer upon layer of shared experience, prefigured by—among many other things—the layering of representation and suggestion over direct emotion in the ravings of Mādhava, and paralleled by the various awarenesses of Bhavabhūti's audience, who also can see Rāma although he cannot see them, and who remember not only the details of Rāma's life but those of Bhavabhūti's earlier plays as well.

I will conclude with a word on one final aspect of this deliberate intermingling of aesthetic theory with emotional description, which is the question of why the forms of dramatic progression I have described culminate in Bhavabhūti's writing about Rāma specifically, thus ending his career by revisiting the character he began it with. Is it simply that he has unfinished business in not having yet dealt with the problem of Sītā, and if so, why was it that he dealt with Rāma to begin with?

This choice of Rāma, which as it happens is another topic that Shulman has dealt with in the article that I mentioned, probably has to do with the fact that Rāma, more than any other character in Sanskrit literature, is the person most involved in the problem of hearing stories about oneself.[29] I would add to this that in both of Bhavabhūti's later plays—and indeed even in his first play, especially in its fascination with the problems of Brahmin and Kṣatriya identity—Bhavabhūti is grappling with the theme of concealed identities or misunderstood identities, but that this is connected with his peculiar insistence on using the words of dramatic theory to talk about real-life experience, and on exploring the inter-connections between personal identity and the representation of persons in literature and on the stage.

Even beyond this, as others have noticed, there are explicit indications in Bhavabhūti's work that his own conception of the relation between life and the stage, and of the relation between the words associated with each, is intimately connected with the philosophical concept of *śabda-brahma-vivarta*, the idea that all of human experience involves series of transformations (ultimately linguistic), in such a way that the boundaries between emotions, and between persons, and

29. Shulman 2001, 271, "Rāma ... must always, or ever again, watch himself be re-enacted in one form or another of the *Rāmāyaṇa*."

between the identities of individual persons, are not as clear cut as one might think they are. In this way it becomes appropriate for people to be hidden and not hidden at the same time, for two people to speak the same verse to two different listeners, for one person to begin a verse and another person to end it, for people to be unsure what it is that they are feeling but to insist on talking about it, and to do so using language which is supposed to be designed to talk not about real emotions but about the artistic representation of them. It is a view in which life ends up being lived as a kind of art form in itself.

But beyond this it is also a view of life and of art in which language is central both in living and in art, and as a result of which it becomes clear, abundantly so by the time we reach the last of Bhavabhūti's works, that Speech herself is the real heroine of the poetry, and that the poet's treatment of her is the central topic of his work.[30] In the end this is Bhavabhūti's most significant achievement, both in the impact of his poetry and in the success of his endeavor to express through his poetry the insights and concerns of the old traditions of linguistic and philosophical enquiry in their impact on the understanding of the inner life of humans. For it was he ("the most 'meta' of premodern Indian authors" as Pollock has put it)[31] who established this reflexive attention to language, long present in the works of the great Sanskrit poets but never before so powerfully and engagingly examined in poetry, as an abiding topic that would be taken up with increasing levels of complexity in the *Naiṣadhīya* of Śrīharṣa and in other important works of Sanskrit poetry in the centuries to follow.

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30. See Pollock 2007, 23–25, where Girish Karnad perceptively exposes this idea in reference to the *Uttararāmacarita*, giving credit to the earlier insights of the Kannada critic Kirtinath Kurtkoti.

31. Pollock 2007, 38.

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15

The Poetics of Perspective in Rājaśekhara's *Young Rāmāyaṇa*

Lawrence McCrea

Throughout the long history of Sanskrit literature, probably no story was so often told and retold as that of Rāma. Following from the archetypal version of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (c. 150 AD?), countless poems and plays were composed on this theme. This long line of literary treatment attests to the enduring appeal of the story, but it also came to pose something of a problem for later poets and dramatists: how to find ways of telling the story that were sufficiently faithful to the original version of Vālmīki to capture what it was that made it worth retelling, yet still original enough to be interesting to readers who would, presumably, have already been exposed to many other versions.[1] Poets employed a variety of techniques to vary the tale, or the telling of it, enough to allow them some space for creativity while maintaining the basic contours of the traditional narrative. Some introduced new plot elements, or significantly altered existing ones. Some chose to focus intensely on one or more small parts of the Rāma narrative (most notably Bhavabhūti, in his *Uttararāmacarita*).

1. The problem was openly acknowledged as early as the eighth century: In his highly celebrated (but now lost) play *Rāmābhyudaya*, King Yaśovarman of Kanauj proudly declares that in his play there is "not even slight overstepping in the course of the story" (*kathāmārge ca nālpo 'py atikramaḥ*), implicitly contrasting his own work with others which have, in his view, excessively tampered with the original narrative in their own retellings. Ānandavardhana, who quotes this line of Yaśovarman, takes the position that variation on the original version of a story is acceptable, but only so long as it does not interfere with the intended *rasa* of the work (*Dhvanyāloka*, Kashi ed., 335).

Others still tried to present standard elements of the narrative from a new or unfamiliar point of view, offering an original perspective on an already well known tale.

All these elements, but especially the last, figure prominently in Rājaśekhara's *Bālarāmāyaṇa*. Rājaśekhara was a court poet of Mahendrapāla of Kanauj (r. 903–907 AD) and of his successor Mahīpāla (r. 907–25).[2] Rājaśekhara was perhaps the most celebrated dramatist of the tenth century, and one of the most frequently quoted and anthologized poets, and the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* would appear to have been his magnum opus. Rājaśekhara himself was of course acutely conscious of the long line of Rāma poems and plays which have gone before, and its bearing on the creation and reception of his own work. The title *Bālarāmāyaṇa* itself reflects on this tradition: Rājaśekhara's work is the "Young *Rāmāyaṇa*," a repetition but also a renewal of its archetype, recreating the old as something new. Nor is Vālmīki's epic the only prior version of the Rāma story he directly adverts to. He addresses the issue directly in the opening of his play with what is, for him, typical bravado. Never given over to false modesty, Rājaśekhara actually claims, in the introduction to his play, to be the reincarnation of Vālmīki himself, as well as of the poet Bhartṛmeṇṭha, and of the dramatist Bhavabhūti.[3] However seriously we are meant to take this claim, it is not merely a piece of self-aggrandizement. It effectively constructs a canon of Rāma-literature, of which we are clearly meant to see the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* as an outgrowth.[4]

The title of Rājaśekhara's work, and the series in which he places it, suggest that the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* is meant to be seen as a kind of literary reincarnation;

2. See De 1976, 119–20. The *Bālarāmāyaṇa* was written under the patronage of Mahendrapāla (see *Bālarāmāyaṇa* [henceforth, BR], p. 1).

3. First there was the anthill-born poet Vālmīki, then he came into the world as Bhartṛmeṇṭha,
Again he stood forth with the form of Bhavabhūti, and now he is Rājaśekhara.
babhūva valmīkabhavaḥ purā kavis tataḥ prapede bhuvi bhartṛmeṇṭhatām /
sthitaḥ punar yo bhavabhūtirekhayā sa vartate samprati rājaśekharaḥ // BR I.16.

Bhavabhūti (c. 650) is presumably noted for his play *Mahāvīracarita*, which seems more than any other to serve as a model for the *Bālarāmāyaṇa*. Bhartṛmeṇṭha is known chiefly as the author of the (lost) poem *Hayagrīvavadha*, but is said to have written a poem on Rāma as well (see Krishnamachariar 1937, 132–33), and it is presumably on this ground that Rājaśekhara claims him as a prior incarnation here.

4. Note the absence of Murāri; had Rājaśekhara known his work and thought at all well of it, it is hard to see why he would not have claimed to be a reincarnation of him as well. The temporal relationship between Rājaśekhara and Murāri cannot be conclusively settled. Some have dated Murāri earlier, based on a supposed reference to Murāri in Ratnākara's (c. 825 AD) *Haravijaya*, and a quotation from Murāri's *Anargharāghava* found in some manuscripts of Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*; but the evidence is at best questionable on both counts (see Warder, Vol. VI: 23–24, 34–35).

it both is and is not identified with its famous precursors. But what exactly is it that is "young" about this "Young *Rāmāyaṇa*"? How does this *Rāmāyaṇa* differentiate itself from its prior avatars? While Rājaśekhara, like Bhavabhūti before him, adds new narrative elements not found in Vālmīki, the most striking aspect of his work lies not in its innovations of content, but in its novel mode of presentation. Much of the play is devoted to presenting familiar narrative content from original, and sometimes quite bizarre, points of view. In it Rājaśekhara shows a persistent fascination with representation and spectation: it is not so much a play about Rāma and Sītā as it is about those who watch them, or who (like us) only hear about them, or see them represented.

A. The Centrality of Rāvaṇa

By far the most immediately striking feature of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, and its most visible departure from prior treatments of the story of Rāma, is the way it places Rāma's antagonist Rāvaṇa at the center of the drama. Indeed, it seems almost misleading to describe the play as presenting the story of Rāma at all; it is really above all Rāvaṇa's tale. The *Bālarāmāyaṇa* is a massive work—probably the longest Sanskrit play ever written[5]—yet in it the presence of Rāma himself is surprisingly attenuated. He appears in only three of the play's ten acts, and even then he comes across as rather unprepossessing and is often overshadowed by other figures on the stage. Correspondingly, other characters are brought to the fore: Daśaratha, Paraśurāma, and above all Rāvaṇa.

It is Rāvaṇa, the ostensible villain of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who is most richly developed, and who dominates the stage for the better part of the play.[6] It is almost as if he, rather than Rāma, is the real hero of the play. Moreover, he is presented first and foremost as a *romantic* figure.[7] The play's first act presents Rāvaṇa's attempt to win Sītā in marriage by stringing and drawing Śiva's bow. This in itself is not unprecedented: other playwrights, most notably Bhavabhūti in his *Mahāvīracarita*, made Rāvaṇa compete for Sītā's hand.[8] What is unusual

5. While highly regarded within the tradition, the play has drawn some of the most excoriating criticism of any Sanskrit work from modern critics, much of it directed at its sheer length, which they seem to regard as an affront (De and Dasgupta 1947, 455–57, Keith 1924, 232–33, and Shekhar 1960, 189–91.

6. Rāvaṇa is onstage for five of the play's ten acts (I, II, III, V, and VIII), while Rāma himself appears in only three (IV, VII, and X); the other main focus is Daśaratha, who likewise appears in three acts (IV, VI, IX).

7. As Krishnamachariar briefly but perceptively notes (see Krishnamchariar 1937, 629).

8. *Mahāvīracarita* Act I; also, Murāri's *Anargharāghava*, Act III, and the (lost) *Jānakīrāghava* (on the last, see Warder, volume III, 249–51).

is the direct presentation of this event onstage; in Bhavabhūti's version, we only hear of Rāvaṇa's attempt from a messenger, as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa hear it. It is their reaction, rather than the event itself, that is foregrounded. In the opening act of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, Rāma is nowhere to be seen; he is mentioned only twice in passing.[9] The focus is entirely on Rāvaṇa, and on his passion for Sītā.

In an odd way, Rāvaṇa's portrayal here and in succeeding acts plays on, and effectively parodies the established conventions of romantic drama. As the act begins, two characters enter. One is Śunaḥśepha, the pupil of the sage Viśvāmitra, come to apologize for his teacher's inability to attend King Janaka's sacrifice (he has instead gone to Ayodhyā to seek Rāma's aid in fighting the *rākṣasa*s who are troubling him). The other is a *rākṣasa* agent sent by Rāvaṇa's chief minister Mālyavant. Rāvaṇa has heard that King Janaka's miraculously-born daughter Sītā will be married to whoever can string Śiva's bow, and the spy has been sent to gather more information. But, he has also been ordered by Mālyavant to monitor the movements of Viśvāmitra—in particular, whether he is traveling to see Daśaratha in Ayodhyā or to Janaka's city of Mithilā. Rāvaṇa wishes to come to Mithilā to compete for Sītā's hand, but Mālyavant is seeking to divert him, fearing that a dangerous conflict will result. If Viśvāmitra is traveling to Mithilā, he will use that as an excuse to keep Rāvaṇa away, but "if he should go to Daśaratha, I will strive to prevent Rāvaṇa's journey on some other pretext."[10]

This plot of Mālyavant sets up what will become a recurrent conflict between Rāvaṇa and his chief minister throughout the play: Mālyavant repeatedly seeks to frustrate Rāvaṇa's intended actions, but does so in pursuit of Rāvaṇa's own political best interests. As the *rākṣasa* spy (quoting Mālyavant) puts it:

> The master does whatever he likes, for whatever reason.
> The ministers have a hard life, trying to undo it![11]

This is not an unfamiliar dynamic in Sanskrit drama—the impetuous and romance-minded king who neglects his own interests and the crafty minister who deceives and manipulates the king for the king's own benefit. It is a stock feature, in particular, of the substantial literature surrounding King Udayana and his minister Yaugandharāyaṇa.[12]

9. BR, pp. 17, 23.

10. ... *yadi daśarathaṃ prati yāyāt tad aham anyâpadeśena daśa-khandharasya yātrā-bhaṅgāya yatiṣye*/ (BR, p. 20).

11. *svêcchayā kurute svāmi yat kiṃcana yatas tataḥ*/
tat tat praticikīrṣanto duḥkhaṃ jīvanti mantriṇaḥ// (BR 1.25, p. 20).

12. In these and similar plays, the king invariably attains his romantic objective; and the minister his political one, while here both will of course fail. This becomes a pattern, as we will see, as Rāvaṇa is regularly depicted in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* failing in the same tasks in which Rāma and other heroes succeed.

The inclusion of the motif here is a bit jarring, as it seems to cast Rāvaṇa in the role of the romantic lead. Moreover, the perspectives offered by the play on Rāvaṇa as a prospective suitor are not as uniformly negative as one might expect. After their entering speeches in Act 1, Śunaḥśepha and the *rākṣasa* meet. After some comic banter in which each disparages the other's guru,[13] Śunaḥśepha realizes that he is speaking to a *rākṣasa* and tricks him into revealing Rāvaṇa's plan to marry Sītā. Upon hearing this the *brāhmaṇa*, unsurprised, remarks: "This makes sense: Rāvaṇa is the conqueror of the world. How will he fail to string Śiva's bow and marry the princess not born from a womb?"[14] After all, why shouldn't Rāvaṇa marry Sītā? As conqueror of the known universe, he is really something of a catch. The same notion is touched on later in the act by Janaka's priest Śatānanda when Rāvaṇa arrives to try his hand at stringing the bow and Janaka expresses his dismay at the thought that he might succeed:

> Really, it's amazing—One serious fault spoils even a full complement of virtues, since:
>
> His command is familiar even to the crest-jewel of the king of the gods. The sciences are a new eye for him. He is devoted to Śiva, the Lord of Spirits. The divine city Laṅkā is his home, and he is born in the family of Brahmā. Indeed, such a bridegroom is unattainable! If only he weren't *Rāvaṇa*. But, where in the world can all virtues be found in one place?[15]

Considered objectively, Rāvaṇa seems to have all that one could ask of a prospective husband: power, wealth, learning, and sincere religious devotion. He seems as if he should be a strong, and perfectly legitimate, claimant to compete for Sītā's hand. Something in Śatānanda rebels at the idea, but even so he can't but acknowledge Rāvaṇa's many good qualities.[16] If Rāvaṇa sees himself

13. Or, in the *rākṣasa*'s case, his pretended guru, the sage Agastya.

14. *yukti-yuktaṃ caitat /*
agarbha-saṃbhavāṃ kanyāṃ daśa-kaṇṭho jagaj-jayī /
āropya harakodaṇḍaṃ kathaṃ na pariṇeṣyati //BR I.29.

15. *ahaha! āścaryam eko 'pi garīyān doṣaḥ samagram api guṇa-grāmaṃ dūṣayati. tathā hi.*
ājñā śakra-śikhāmaṇi-praṇayiṇī śāstrāṇi cakṣur navaṃ
bhaktir bhūta-patau pinākini padaṃ laṅketi divyā purī /
utpattir druhiṇânvaye ca tad aho nedṛg varo labhyate
syāc ced eṣa na rāvaṇaḥ kva nu punaḥ sarvatra sarve guṇāḥ //BR I.36.

16. What is it that makes him resist? What is the "one serious fault" which makes Rāvaṇa's otherwise ideal claim to Sītā's hand seem so troubling? Isn't it really Rāvaṇa's (literary) reputation? One simply knows that Rāvaṇa is "the bad guy," the *pratināyaka*. But one knows this, of course, through the literary conditioning produced by the *Rāmāyaṇa* and other texts which, in the play's narrative time-frame, do not yet exist.

as a potential lover of Sītā, the play seems to go out of its way to suggest, contrary to our engrained literary expectations, that he does so with a certain plausibility.

This disconcerting casting of Rāvaṇa in the hero's role is borne out when he himself appears on stage. At the end of the prologue to Act I, Rāvaṇa enters, flying in the aerial chariot Puṣpaka (in which Rāma himself will later return from Laṅkā). He is now on his way to Janaka's city of Mithilā to string Śiva's bow. But the arrival of Rāvaṇa occasions a kind of celestial traffic jam, as his minister Prahasta observes: "What's this? This host of gods, longing to see the ten-faced lord Rāvaṇa, fills up the whole arc of the sky in front of us."[17] He warns off the gods and cautions them to restrain their radiance. Here and elsewhere, Rājaśekhara seems to enjoy dramatizing, with a slightly comic overliteralness, the well-worn but usually throwaway labeling of Rāvaṇa as "Lord of the Three Worlds." Moreover, the threat posed by Rāvaṇa's massive and uncontrolled retinue seems once again to deliberately echo a famous romantic drama: this time Act I of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, when Duṣyanta's followers intrude on Kaṇva's ashram.[18]

His overeager retinue dismissed, Rāvaṇa proceeds to meet with Janaka and his priest. Though Janaka feels trepidation, he is bound by his promise that whoever strings the bow may marry Sītā. Accordingly, Sītā is brought for Rāvaṇa to see, and the bow is produced so that he may string it. Rāvaṇa's response upon seeing Sītā is entirely what one would expect of the hero in a romantic play, and expressed in thoroughly familiar terms.[19] The essential difference, of course, is that Rāvaṇa's love at first sight, unlike that of Duṣyanta, Purūravas, Udayana, et al., is completely unrequited. Sītā is, of course, horrified at the thought of the marriage. Rāvaṇa's love for Sītā, though presented formally in a manner much like that of a typical romantic hero, represents a distortion, almost a kind of parody, of an ordinary lover's state of mind. And Rāvaṇa's actions too, here and in the following act, seem to deliberately mimic, in a distorted form, those of the paradigmatic dramatic hero, Rāma himself.

This is seen first and foremost in Rāvaṇa's encounter with Śiva's bow. Śiva's bow, when it is brought forth, appears to be old and worm-eaten. Rāvaṇa, Prahasta, and even Janaka assume that Rāvaṇa, who has single-handedly conquered

17. *kathaṃ daśânana-deva-darśanâkāṅkṣi vṛndāraka-vṛndam idam agrataḥ samagram api gaganâbhogaṃ bibharti.* BR ad I 30.

18. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I.28ff.

19. See especially BR I.42–43.

the three worlds, will string the bow easily, or even break it. Rāvaṇa, anticipating that the bow will snap as soon as he bends it, declares:

> When this bow resounds greatly, tearing on its upper surface when the knots of its heavy string are made to rest on its two bent ends due to its being powerfully bent by the stalks of my arms, let its very loud "TAṄ"-sound, heard by the gods, steady as the raucous sound which arises from the drum Śiva strikes at the end of the world, fill up the cavity of the sky![20]

The description Rāvaṇa gives here of the sound of his anticipated breaking of the bow unmistakably alludes to a famous verse from Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita* in which Lakṣmaṇa describes the sound that follows from Rāma's actual breaking of the bow:

> Amazing! The sound "TAṄ" that rose from the breaking of the shaft of Śiva's bow when it was bent by the stalks of [Rāma's] arms—a drum [proclaiming] the fame of this noble one's youthful deeds—its accumulated ferocity bouncing around inside the box which is the cosmic egg contained within the space of its rapidly discarded shells, does not stop even now![21]

Even the sound of the breaking bow matches. Further inflating our expectation of the event, Rāvaṇa's aide Prahasta now warns the forces supporting the universe to prepare for the impact:

> O Earth, be firm! Snake, hold her up! You, Tortoise-king, support them both! O elephants of the directions, make an effort to hold these three! My Lord [Rāvaṇa] is stringing the bow of Śiva!
> Aruṇa [charioteer of the Sun], stop your horses a moment!
> O Elephant-driver, knot your thighs tightly around the neck of the

20. *asmad-dor-daṇḍa-caṇḍâñcana-nibiḍa-guṇa-granthi-bhugnôbhayâśri-vyaśrī-bhāvordhva-pṛṣṭha-truṭad-anaṇu-raṇat-karmaṇaḥ kārmukasya / kalpântôdbhrānta-bharga-prahata-ḍamarukôḍḍāmara-dhvāna-dhīraṣ ṭaṅ-kāras tāra-tāras tridaśa-niśamito vyoma-randhraṃ ruṇaddhu* //BR I.46.
21. *dor-daṇḍâñcita-candra-śekhara-dhanur-daṇḍâvabhaṅgôdyataṣ ṭaṅ-kāra-dhvanir ārya-bāla-carita-prastāvanā-ḍiṇḍimaḥ / drāk-paryasta-kapāla-saṃpuṭa-mita-brahmâṇḍa-bhāṇḍôdara-bhrāmyat-piṇḍita-caṇḍimā katham aho nâdyâpi viśrāmyati // Mahāvīracarita* I.54.

The verse is given as one of the paradigmatic examples of the bold "Bengali" (*gauḍīyā*) style of poetry: see Vāmana, *Kāvyālaṃkārasūtravṛtti* ad 1.2.12 (Kāvyamālā ed., p. 5).

heavenly elephant! You hordes of gods, put your hands on your ears! Who will not be frightened by the harsh "ṬAṄ" sound born from the breaking of Śiva's bow in the hand of his friend, the Lord of Laṅkā?[22]

Yet all this rather overblown buildup comes to nothing. Once he holds the bow in his hand, Rāvaṇa recoils from actually attempting to break it. He says it is only because he disdains to submit to any test before claiming what he wishes (BR I.50–51—It is not clear if we are meant to take this at face value or not; as we will see later, many of the other kings who compete to marry Sītā recoil in a similar manner from attempting to string the bow.) He throws the bow away in disgust. Janaka, outraged that Rāvaṇa has disrespected Śiva's bow in this way, rises to attack him, and a battle between the two is narrowly averted (BR I.52ff).[23] Rāvaṇa leaves, but vows that he will decapitate anyone who strings the bow and marries Sītā (BR I.61). So ends the first act.

The centerpiece of Act II is another invented scene, a confrontation between Rāvaṇa and Paraśurāma. Again, there is an evident attempt to make Rāvaṇa's career mirror that of Rāma (who will later, famously, clash with Paraśurāma). But, again, the mirror is a distorted one, making Rāvaṇa fail where Rāma will later succeed.

The act begins with the entry of Bhṛṅgirīti, the skeletal attendant of Śiva and Pārvatī. He has been sent by his master, on a mission, which is at first not revealed. Along the way, he meets the divine sage Nārada, whom he describes as a "fight-crazed" sage (*kalaha-kutūhalin*—BR II.5). Amply justifying this description, Nārada introduces himself with a truly extraordinary soliloquy. To quote only a portion:

It's true, it's true, what they say: One can't escape one's nature! Since:
As my mind is preoccupied with this thought—"Who fought, who fights, who will fight, crazed with pride?"—the time comes and goes for me.
Day after day, I roam the three worlds, in order to see battles—battles in which the horses have their entrails hanging out, elephants

22. *pṛthvi sthirā bhava bhujaṅgama dhārayaināṃ tvaṃ kūrma-rāja tad idaṃ dvitayaṃ dadhīthāḥ / dik-kuñjarāḥ kuruta tat-tritaye didhīrṣāṃ devaḥ karoti hara-kārmukam ātatajyam* //BR I.48.
aśvān viśvāsayaitān kṣaṇam aruṇa kuru svarga-mātaṅga-kaṇṭhaṃ
gāḍhoru-granthim ādhoraṇa vibudha-gaṇāḥ karṇayor datta hastān /
laṅkêndrôdagra-pāṇi-praṇayi-bhava-dhanur-bhaṅga-janmā kaṭhoraṣ
ṭaṅ-kāraḥ svarga-rodaḥ-kuhara-valayitas trāsa-kārī na kasya //BR I.49.

23. Rāvaṇa forbears from fighting Janaka since he views him as a future father-in-law (BR I.56); Janaka is persuaded to relent by Yājñavalkya's student Śunaḥśepha (BR I.57).

are careening around from the blows of swords, great ghouls are shrieking, and the dancing of the running headless bodies is fierce!

(*Thinking*) When a man is attached to something, he heeds only that, disregarding all else. For, It's my highest brahman, my asceticism, and my sacrifice, my study and my prayer—that I should see a fierce battle!

When you're addicted to something, and it isn't at hand, even a substitute eases the urge. And so, When I can't find a battle between heroes, I watch and listen to the fights of women with their co-wives, full of nails and screaming.

Quails, partridges, chicken, sheep, water-buffalo—even their battle-games are delightful for sage Nārada, who was born during a quarrel between Brahmā and Viṣṇu![24]

He goes on in the same vein.[25] He goes on to explain (still speaking to himself) that, hearing that Paraśurāma has been angered by Rāvaṇa's disrespectful treatment of Śiva's bow, he is on his way to provoke a fight between the two. He meets Bhṛṅgirīti, and learns that he too is on his way to see Rāvaṇa and Paraśurāma. The two trade speculations as to which of the two is likelier to prevail over the other (BR: II.12), but Nārada then learns that Bhṛṅgirīti has been

24. *satyaṃ satyam idam gīyate dustyajā prakṛtir iti / yataḥ*
yuyudhe yudhyate ko vā yotsyate vā madôddhataḥ /
iti me vyagra-manasaḥ kālo 'bhyeti ca yāti ca // BR II.6
api ca /
srastântra-tantra-turagāṇi kṛpāṇa-ghāta-ghūrṇa-karīṇy anaṇu-pūtana-phūtkṛtāni /
dhāvat-kabandha-kaṭu-tāṇḍava-ḍāmarāṇi draṣṭuṃ raṇāny ahar ahas tri-jagad bhramāmi //
BR II.7
(vimṛśya) yo yatrânuraktaḥ sa tad-anya-tiraskāreṇa tad eva bahu-manyate / tathā hi /
tan mama brahma paramaṃ tat tapaḥ sā kratu-kriyā /
sa svādhyāyaḥ sa ca japo yad vīkṣe yuddham uddhatam // BR II. 8
yena kenacid vyasanino janasya tad-asannidhāne tat-pratinidhir api vinodāya / tathā câham /
alābhe vīrayuddhasya nakhavādanasaṃbhṛtam /
sāpatnya-kakali strīṇāṃ paśyāmi ca śṛṇomi ca // BR II.9
kiṃ ca
lāvaka-tittiri-kukkuṭa-meṣair mahiṣaiś ca yā raṇa-krīḍāḥ /
druhiṇâcyuta-kali-yones tāḥ prītyai nāradasya muneḥ //BR II.10.

25. This broadly farcical treatment, particularly of a divine and normally revered sage, is altogether shocking; it's hard to think of any other play or poem that so openly and mercilessly satirizes a nominally sacred figure in this way. The portrayal builds on elements which are subtextually present in other treatments: Nārada is generally presented as a gossip and something of a troublemaker, whose appearances often lead to quarrels or other difficulties. But the suggestion that he deliberately provokes conflicts for his own amusement, much less that he is addicted to such spectacles as cockfighting, is not, to my knowledge, found anywhere prior to this text.

sent by Śiva precisely to prevent them from fighting (presumably since both are his devotees). The prologue of the act ends as Nārada, greatly disappointed, sets out for Ayodhyā, hoping instead to draw Rāma into a fight with Rāvaṇa, or with Paraśurāma (though he lies to Bhṛṅgirīti, telling him that he is returning to the world of Brahmā—BR II.16).

As the act proper begins, Rāvaṇa enters with an attendant. He is obsessed with Sītā, thinking only of her beauty, and is distracted from all other business (again echoing the great heroes of Sanskrit romantic drama, especially Duṣyanta of *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and Purūravas of *Vikramorvaśīya*). He is only drawn from his reverie when an envoy arrives bearing an insulting message from Paraśurāma. Soon Paraśurāma himself arrives, and the bulk of the act is devoted to a long and increasingly bombastic exchange of insults and threats between the two great warriors. To all appearances, things are building to the point of a physical clash between the two. But, of course, we know already that this is not to be. Just as the two are finally about to come to blows, Bhṛṅgirīti finally arrives, with his message from Śiva. The two are forced, much against their will, to make peace and go their separate ways. Once again, Rāvaṇa is seen (through no fault of his own, this time) failing to accomplish what we know Rāma will later successfully achieve—the defeat of Paraśurāma in battle. Taken together, the first two acts of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* keep Rāvaṇa as the overwhelming focus of attention (and Rāma completely marginal), while still managing to place Rāvaṇa in Rāma's (implied) shadow.

B. Spectacles and Spectators

Even after Rāvaṇa's abortive endeavors in Acts I and II, he remains the dominant character for much of the play, but is hereafter presented in an almost entirely passive role. Rather than staying "with the action," as Rāma goes on to achieve what Rāvaṇa has failed to, breaking the bow and winning Sītā as his bride, we follow Rāvaṇa back to Laṅkā, as he broods over the absent Sītā and tries to while away the time. From this point on—the point where the basic narrative thread drawn from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* more or less begins—Rājaśekhara's play becomes a study less of what Rāma accomplishes or experiences than of how other characters, principally Rāvaṇa and Daśaratha, themselves learn of and react to Rāma's story. Spectation emerges as a dominant theme: quite overtly so in Act III, the centerpiece of which is a play performed for Rāvaṇa by a visiting troupe of actors.[26] And the subject of this (extremely current and topical) play is

26. It is, in fact, the archetypal troupe of actors, the pupils of Bharata—the mythical inventor of drama—himself. Bharata does not himself appear, but he is said to be the author of the play the actors present (see BR III.11ff).

none other than Sītā's bridegroom-choice! Bear in mind that Rāma himself has still not appeared on stage at this point. We, along with Rāvaṇa, see Rāma portrayed on stage by an actor before we ever see him in the flesh.

The play-within-a-play constructed here is virtually a full-fledged drama in its own right, with its own benedictory verse, its own prologue, and the like. Through it Rājaśekhara sets forth a complex play of reactions and reactions to reactions, as we watch Rāvaṇa watching the play. As spectator and auditor, the ten-headed, twenty-eyed and twenty-eared Rāvaṇa is rather spectacularly over-endowed: a fact which is explicitly addressed in the prologue of the play-within-a-play. The stage manager, speaking directly to Rāvaṇa, declares:

> This play, *The Bridegroom-Choice of Sītā*, deserves to be drunk in by many ears, and seen by many long eyes—It's as if it were composed for your sake![27]

The play begins (after the prologue) as the sage Viśvāmitra, accompanied by his two pupils Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, arrives to observe Sītā's bridegroom-choice ceremony. Rāvaṇa watches quietly at first, but reacts with annoyance when he realizes who this Rāma being portrayed really is:

> Rāvaṇa: (disparagingly) Oh! This is *that* Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, the enemy of Tāṭakā and her sons! (looking at the sage) Aha, such is the skill of the *kṣatriya-brāhmaṇa* in sorcery that this *kṣatriya* boy has produced a childish fracas even in my own retinue![28]

Though he knows the boy by reputation, he shows no regard for him, assuming that his power derives only from that of his teacher Viśvāmitra. Within the play, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Viśvāmitra take their seats to observe the competition. Sītā herself comes forth to watch, and we begin to see how Rājaśekhara plays with issues of perspective and representation, as both the (false) Rāma and the (real) Rāvaṇa respond to the beauty of Sītā (or rather, of the actress portraying her).[29]

Now the contest begins, and Rāma watches silently, while the spectator Rāvaṇa remains very much in the foreground, offering a running commentary as the play progresses. A door-warden of king Janaka serves as announcer for the *svayaṃvara*. She begins by announcing the stakes of the contest—that Sītā will marry whoever can string the bow "against which the power of Rāvaṇa's arms

27. *śravaṇaiḥ peyam anekair dṛśyaṃ dīrghaiś ca locanair bahubhiḥ /*
bhavad-artham iva nibaddhaṃ nāṭyaṃ sītā-svayaṃ-varaṇam //BR III.12.

28. *Rāvaṇaḥ: (sākṣepam) aye! ayam asau rāmo dāśarathir yas tāṭakâris tāṭakeyâriś ca / (munim uddiśya) / aho kṣatriya-brāhmaṇasyâbhicāre cāturyaṃ yad asmat-parijane 'pi janitavān ayam api kṣatriya-ḍimbho ḍimbha-ḍambaram /* (BR III.17).

29. BR III.21–25.

was blunted,"[30] at which point Rāvaṇa angrily protests at the insult to his strength. This is only the first of many outbursts on Rāvaṇa's part. If the ideal spectator (as imagined by the Kashmiri dramatic theorists Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta) is one who responds to a play neither as someone personally involved nor as an indifferent witness, but with a generalized emotional mood that overrides distinctions of personal identity, then Rāvaṇa's response to the drama is almost diametrically opposite to this ideal.[31] As we shall see, he veers back and forth between over-personalized involvement—forgetting that the play is only a play—and an overly uninvolved detachment.

The bulk of the play-within-a-play, and of the entire act (BR III.28–65), is given over to detailed descriptions of each king's encounter with the bow. The actions of each are described, and then commented on by a series of characters, both inside and outside the play. A regular pattern is established: the porter announcer introduces the king and describes his exploits, Sītā's companion Hemaprabhā praises the king's beauty or prowess, Sītā replies to her with a (generally dismissive) comment, and Rāvaṇa too comments derisively on the king and his failure (often followed by a satirical aside by Rāvaṇa's aide Prahasta, commenting on his master's repeated lapses in responding to the play as if it were reality). All the kings fail, of course, though each fails in his own distinct way. Like Rāvaṇa, they all finally recoil from the attempt to string the bow—one simply bows to the bow and backs away (BR III.33), another repeatedly casts his glance back and forth between the bow and his two arms before retreating (BR III.43), while a third casts his glance away as if distracted by a friend's conversation (BR III.49). It begins to seem as if the contest is one of psychological strength, rather than physical (as in Vālmīki's and most other versions). It is not that the bow is so heavy or so strong that no one can string it, but that all are somehow cowed by the aura of power that surrounds it (and perhaps fearful of the consequences of disrespecting Śiva by breaking it). One king refuses to compete and makes as if to seize Sītā by force instead (BR III.55). Rāvaṇa, forgetting himself, angrily rises to attack him for violating the rules of the *svayaṃvara*, seemingly oblivious to the close parallel between the king's conduct and his own. Prahasta laughs at him for losing his hold on reality (BR III.56). When, after all the kings have failed, prince Rāma tries his hand, Rāvaṇa begins by praising him for his daring (BR ad III. 70). When he actually succeeds in stringing and breaking the bow, Rāvaṇa at first denounces it as a literary fiction (BR ad III.77), then

30. BR III.27.

31. This is not to imply that Rājaśekhara was at all aware of the Bhaṭṭanāyaka/Abhinavagupta model of aesthetic response, which appears to post-date him. Still, it does seem as if we are meant to see Rāvaṇa's response to the play as in some sense dysfunctional.

scorns his achievement—he has only broken an old worm-eaten bow, after all (BR III.81). When he sees Sītā offered to Rāma in marriage, he again becomes enraged and rises as if to attack (BR ad III.84). Reminded once again by Prahasta that it is only a play, he is confused and embarrassed. The play-within-a-play ends and, recalling his former vow to kill whoever marries Sītā, he exits, vowing enmity to (the real) Rāma.

At this point one may well begin to wonder if we are ever going to see Rāma himself in the flesh. It is only in Act IV that the real Rāma at last appears. After all this wait, one might perhaps expect him to make something of a dramatic entrance, but nothing could be farther from the case. After the prologue (to be discussed below), we see not Rāma but Daśaratha entering. He is riding in the chariot of his good friend Indra, driven by Indra's own charioteer Mātali and fanned by the divine nymph Saudāminī. He has heard that there is to be a battle between his son and the sage Paraśurāma. The latter is angered at the disrespect Rāma has shown to Śiva by breaking his bow.[32] Now on his way to witness the battle, Daśaratha asks to know more of Paraśurāma's past. By fortunate coincidence, Indra's capacious chariot happens to contain an entire picture gallery devoted to the portrayal of Paraśurāma's famous exploits. A very large portion of the act (BR IV.12–41) is devoted to Daśaratha's viewing of these pictures, with narration and commentary from Mātali and Saudāminī. So, once again, we are drawn away from events in themselves, and toward the contemplation of artistic representations of them.

Finally, Daśaratha arrives in Mithilā, in time to witness the now married Sītā taking leave of her father. Rāma is present, but, apart from a brief soliloquy upon witnessing Sītā's tears upon leaving her home (BR IV.47), he remains silent. Soon Paraśurāma bursts onto the scene, spoiling for a fight (BR IV.50ff). He proceeds to deliver a long and rather remarkable monologue (BR IV.52–58), praising, and virtually mourning for, the broken bow, and threatening with death not only he who broke it but also anyone who "approved, saw, praised, heard, or spoke of" the breaking of the bow (BR IV.57). Finally, Rāma seeks to placate him with a few gentle words of praise and apology, but all to no avail of course. A brief discussion ensues between the two Rāmas, Daśaratha, Janaka and his priest Śatānanda, Viśvāmitra and Lakṣmaṇa. Rāma occasionally speaks up, but hardly dominates the conversation; it is really Paraśurāma who dominates the stage from the moment of his appearance. Their conflict being otherwise unresolvable, the act concludes as the two stride off to find a suitable ground for fighting.

32. It appears that Nārada has at last succeeded in arranging a fight to his liking. He summons the gods and the other sages to watch the battle, and even threatens to curse them if they intervene to prevent the battle from taking place (BR IV.4–8)!

In Act V, we return again to Rāvaṇa, still languishing in Laṅkā. Despite his earlier vow to destroy Sītā's husband, he has apparently taken no action as yet. The prologue of the act begins with the appearance of the *rākṣasa* Māyāmaya. Rāvaṇa is sending him as a messenger to Ayodhyā. He is first to demand of Rāma that he turn over his bride to Rāvaṇa, and then to regale Sītā with tales of Rāvaṇa's great accomplishments. Rāvaṇa assumes that she will easily be won over in this way (BR V.2). Māyāmaya is deeply distressed—he fears to take such a message, especially to one who is already an enemy of the *rākṣasa*s and a student of Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. As in Act I, we see here signs of dissension among Rāvaṇa's underlings, torn between the demands of rational policy and the deeply unreasonable and self-destructive impulses of their love-struck king. Instead of delivering his message, Māyāmaya seeks out Rāvaṇa's chief minister Mālyavant. He too is worried about Rāvaṇa's foolish conduct. He has just received a message from his agent in Ayodhyā, and learned that Rāma has defeated Paraśurāma in battle. Realizing that this makes him a formidable foe, he wishes to divert Rāvaṇa from his attempt to claim Sītā for himself. Fortunately, Mālyavant has foreseen this contingency and prepared for it (BR V.5ff). He has commissioned an artisan to produce a mechanical Sītā (which speaks via a mynah bird concealed in its mouth)! He has also had a similar copy made of Sītā's nurse and companion Sindūrikā. Asked what good this will do, he replies: "Rāvaṇa will be captivated by seeing the imitation Sītā, and by captivating him we gain time. For gaining time opens up a wealth of devices for those who understand policy, and the success of one's endeavor depends on devices."[33] Again, the love struck Rāvaṇa must be deceived and manipulated for his own good.[34]

After the prologue, Rāvaṇa and Prahasta enter. Rāvaṇa is delighted to hear that Sītā has come to join him. The two mechanical women are presented to Rāvaṇa as the real Sītā and Sindūrikā, and for a time he is fooled. She seems shy at first, but he persists in his effort to seduce her. It is only when he finally embraces her that he discovers the truth:

> No such wealth of beauty exists even among divine women. But her touch is akin to that of a stone!
> So, I think she is sent here by the wise man of Videha, to test me.

33. *sītā-pratikṛti-darśanena daśānanaḥ pralobhito bhavati, pralobhanena ca kāla-lābhaḥ / kāla-lābho hi nayavidāṃ prayoga-grāmaṃ kandalayati, prayoga-paratantrā ca kārya-siddhiḥ /* (BR ad V.8).

34. Both Keith (1924, 233) and De and Dasgupta (1947, 456–57) entirely misread the mannequin episode, taking the mechanical Sītā to have been produced simply for Rāvaṇa's amusement, and thus entirely overlooking Mālyavant and his strategic use of it to delay Rāvaṇa's proposed course of action.

(looking again) Hey! It's a mechanical imitation of Sītā, with a mynah bird placed in its mouth! Oh wise Māyāmaya! You've been fooled by an imitation of Janaka's daughter. So go, put her in the palace for my amusement.[35]

Even when he has discovered the deception, Rāvaṇa remains deceived, thinking it is Janaka, rather than his own ministers, who has tricked him. And, as Mālyavant predicted, he has been effectively diverted. Even now, he takes no action against Rāma, despite his earlier pledge. Instead, overcome by the heat of his passion, he orders his servant to lead him to his pleasure garden, where he can be cooled. The scene that follows is plainly meant to echo the "love in separation" scenes familiar from many romantic dramas—most notably, Duṣyanta's pining for Śakuntalā in Act VI of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and Purūravas's madness in Act IV of his *Vikramorvaśīya* (the act is even entitled "Rāvaṇa Gone Mad" [*Unmattadaśānana*]). But again, what we see is not so much an imitation or an homage as a parody. Once more, Rāvaṇa's lordship of the universe is displayed with what seems to be deliberately comic excess. He demands to be shown to his pleasure garden "where day and night are simultaneously present, where the sun and moon are risen at the same time, and where all the seasons are separately present at the same time."[36] Having subjugated both heaven and earth, Rāvaṇa literally has all the forces of nature at his beck and call. And he puts them all into service now, demanding that each of the seasons wait on him in turn. Yet all displease him: the summer heat is unbearable when separated from one's lover, the rains (when lovers customarily unite) heighten the pain of his separation, the autumn's moon and blue water-lilies remind him of Sītā's face and her eyes: all the seasons are found wanting in this way. Having passed through all six seasons, Rāvaṇa, almost berserk, demands that they change more and more quickly (BR V.43); but each is unbearable to him. Now all the women of heaven are summoned to cool him: fanning him, sprinkling him with water, applying sandalwood-paste to his body, and so on, all to no avail (BR V.48–50). The goddesses of the Ocean (Vāruṇī),

35. *rūpa-sampad amarīṣu nêdṛśī sparśa eṣa ca dṛśat-sahôdaraḥ /*
tan matir mama videha-janmano māṃ parīkṣitum iyaṃ vijānataḥ // 22
(*punar nirūpya*) *aye / sārikâdhiṣṭhita-vaktraṃ sītā-pratikṛti-yantram / aho matimān māyāmayaś chalito 'si janaka-rāja-putryāḥ pratikṛti-samarpaṇena tad gaccha mad-vinodârtham imāṃ bhavanasthāṃ kuru* / BR V.22ff.

36. *"yugapad-upasthita-rātriṃ-dine yugapad-abhyudita-sūrya-candramasi yugapad-vibhakta-sarva-rtuni..."* BR ad V.22.

Prosperity (Lakṣmī) and Speech (Sarasvatī) all come to comfort him, but he rejects them all:

> Let the Ocean-goddess stay away! What good is the touch of her gems for people separated from their lovers? Even Lakṣmī, the daughter of the Milk-ocean, burns like a sacrificial offering. Go home, Sarasvatī; you talk too much! What occasion is there for talk or fine verses? Truly nothing now can please me, apart from Sītā's favor.[37]

Increasingly farcical and ineffective efforts to cool Rāvaṇa follow. Rāvaṇa eventually becomes demented, imagining that he sees Sītā all around him. He is finally shaken out of his reverie only when his sister Śūrpaṇakhā enters, her nose and ears having been severed by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa (BR ad V.77).[38] When questioned by her brother, Śūrpaṇakhā (like all of Rāvaṇa's underlings, it would seem) lies to him shamelessly. Though she reveals in a soliloquy that she was mutilated after making sexual advances toward the two princes, she tells her brother instead that she was attacked after trying to capture Sītā for Rāvaṇa's benefit. Hearing her (patently false) story, Rāvaṇa is at last driven to act; asserting that now "two reasons have arisen for destroying Daśaratha's son—Sītā and Śūrpaṇakhā," he storms off at last, vowing to destroy Rāma. And now, just when Rāvaṇa finally springs into action, our gaze is forcibly drawn elsewhere.

Act VI begins with an introductory scene between Māyāmaya, Śūrpaṇakhā, and Mālyavant; the former two have just returned from Ayodhyā where, on Mālyavant's orders, they have arranged for Rāma's exile. Mālyavant enters, musing to himself and disparaging Rāvaṇa's lovelorn state once again:

> Even though he's been terribly wronged in this way—even when his sister has been mutilated—the lord puts his anger aside and occupies

37. *dūre tiṣṭhatu vāruṇī virahiṇāṃ kā nāma ratna-spṛhā lakṣmī kṣīra-mahôdadher api sutā svāhêva dāhe paṭuḥ /*
vācālâsi sarasvati vraja gṛhān kaḥ sūkti-goṣṭhī-kṣaṇo yat satyaṃ na mamâdya kiñcana mude sītā-prasādaṃ vinā // BR V.52.

38. Rājaśekhara has altered the order of events, making Śūrpaṇakhā accost Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa before their exile from Ayodhyā (giving Śūrpaṇakhā a personal motive for her deception of Rāma in Act VI (see below). Warder erroneously supposes that Rājaśekhara is here being careless about the chronology of the story (Warder, Vol. VI: 443–44), but it is quite plainly a deliberate alteration: he specifically has Śūrpaṇakhā mention that she approached Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa while they were "stationed at the royal seat of the Raghu family" (Pkt. *Rahu-ula-rāha-hāṇī-pariṭṭhide* = Skt. *raghu-kula-rāja-dhānī-pariṣṭhitau*)—that is while they were still living in Ayodhyā. In her opening speech in Act VI, Śūrpaṇakhā praises the wisdom of Mālyavant in choosing someone who already has a grudge toward Rāma—that is herself—to engineer Rāma's exile, again making clear that the mutilation must precede Rāma's departure from Ayodhyā.

his mind with his attachment to Sītā: the command of the Love-god looms large, suppressing all else![39]

Now he sees Śūrpaṇakhā and Māyāmaya, and they deliver their report on their mission to Ayodhyā. They tell him that they have successfully impersonated the absent Kaikeyī and Daśaratha, and forced Rāma into exile by invoking Kaikeyī's boons. Thus, in Rājaśekhara's version, the pivotal conflict between Daśaratha and his jealous wife becomes a pure fiction–yet another play. The real Daśaratha and Kaikeyī are completely innocent; indeed, the act is entitled "Faultless Daśaratha" (*nirdoṣa-daśaratha*).

And in a further twist, as seen through the *rākṣasas*' eyes, the scene of Rāma and Sītā's forced departure—one of the great tear-jerker moments of Sanskrit literature—is, like so much else in Rājaśekhara's drama, played mainly as comedy. Openly laughing all the while, Śūrpaṇakhā and Māyāmaya describe their imposture, and the overwhelming sadness that followed from it. After Mālyavant has heard what "Kaikeyī" wished for, the following exchange occurs:

Mālyavant (delightedly): And then? Then?
Śūrpaṇakhā (laughing): Even Māyāmaya, who has heard the real Daśaratha, began to lament so pathetically that I'll be damned if the trees didn't weep! Damned if their hearts didn't burst through their clenched throats!

Mālyavant (laughing): Friend Māyāmaya, tell me the rest! Let's hear it from the author's own mouth!
Māyāmaya (laughing): I started to cry like this, sir, with my eyes blocked by the floods pouring out of them! It was like the Ganges was in my right eye and the Yamunā in my left![40]

After a bit more in this vein, the three exit, congratulating themselves on their dramatic and political skills.

39. *itthaṃ mithyā vipralabdho 'pi devas tyaktvâveśaṃ sodarīvaikṛte 'pi /*
jātaḥ sītā-saṅgam āyatta-citto nyak-kṛtyânyaj jṛmbhate manmathâjñā // BR VI.4.

40. ***mālyavān** / saharṣam / tatas tataḥ /*
***śūrpaṇakhā** / vihasya / suda-sacadasaraheṇa vi māāmaeṇa tadhā karuṇaṃ viroiduṃ prauttaṃ jadhā jadi ṇāma taruṇo paraṃ ṇa rovadidā gāvaganṭhīṇaṃ paraṃ jadi ṇa dalai hiaam* (=Skt. *śruta-satya-daśarathenâpi māyāmayena tathā karuṇaṃ viroditum pravṛttaṃ yathā yadi nāma taravaḥ paraṃ na roditā grāva-granthīnāṃ paraṃ yadi na dalati hṛdayam*) /
***mālyavān** / vihasya / bhadra māyāmaya tvam eva śeṣaṃ kathaya kavi-mukhād eva śṛṇumaḥ /*
***māyāmayaḥ** / vihasya /*
tathā mayā prastutam ārya roditum nibaddha-dhārā-prasareṇa cakṣuṣā /
sthitā yathā svarga-nadîva dakṣiṇe yathā ca vāme yamunêva cakṣusi // (BR VI.8).

As the act proper begins, the scene shifts to Ayodhyā. Daśaratha and Kaikeyī descend from the sky in Indra's chariot—Daśaratha has been visiting heaven again. The two are wholly ignorant of what has happened in their absence, and listen with horror as they hear of Rāma's exile. The entire act is devoted to exploring their reactions as they hear first, from their ministers Sumantra and Vāmadeva, about Rāma's heartrending departure from the city with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā and then, from the vulture-messenger Ratnaśikhaṇḍa, about Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa. So, once again, Rājaśekhara keeps his focus resolutely, not on the actors in the story, but on those who only watch and hear of these actions. Through the device of the Daśaratha and Kaikeyī impersonators, he has indeed rendered Daśaratha "faultless," as the title of the act would have it, but at the same time has deprived him of any active role in the story whatsoever. Though he is, apart from Rāvaṇa, probably the most prominently featured character in the play, Daśaratha appears as something very close to a pure spectator, someone who does nothing but see, hear, and react.

It is only with Act VII that we first truly see Rāma himself as the dominant figure on the stage. The act is principally concerned with the building of the bridge across the ocean so that Rāma and his allies can reach Laṅkā. Rāma, we hear, has forced the ocean to permit the construction, by attacking it with streams of arrows (BR VII.31ff). The ocean actually appears as a character, along with his wives, the rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā—in a nice touch, he is said to appear onstage covered with medicinal ointment, and with bandages tied around the wounds he has just received from Rāma.[41] After a lengthy description of the process of bridge building, the *rākṣasa*s begin their attacks on the intruders. These attacks culminate with the arrival of Rāvaṇa himself, flying in his aerial chariot Puṣpaka, with Sītā at his side. From offstage, he threatens Rāma, and then cuts off the head of Sītā before his eyes (BR VII.71ff). Rāma is devastated, and delivers an impassioned lament (BR VII.73–75), but his resolve to destroy Rāvaṇa is only reaffirmed. But suddenly, Lakṣmaṇa notices something wrong:

Lakṣmaṇa: Amazing! Amazing! Even though it's been cut off, the
Lady's head is speaking! Let's go close and listen.
(*They all approach.*)
Lakṣmaṇa: What's this? It's speaking clearly!
It's a mechanical Sītā, with its wooden limbs moved by an engineer
and a mynah bird in its throat for a voice, made for the
amusement of Laṅkā's king![42]

41. *sauṣadhi-niṣeko baddha-vraṇa-paṭṭaś ca* (BR ad VII.34).

42. ***lakṣmaṇaḥ*** */ āścāryam āścāryam / nirlūnam apy āryā-śiraḥ samullapati tad savidha-vartino bhūtvā śṛṇumaḥ / sarve samupasarpanti / lakṣmaṇaḥ / kathaṃ sphuṭâkṣaram idam abhidhatte /*

It is, of course, not the real Sītā's head, but that of Mālyavant's replica, now pressed into service as a decoy.[43] And, in another redeployed convention of romantic drama, it is an errant talking bird that gives the game away. Like Rāvaṇa before him, Rāma has been taken in by a copy. Given the play's obsession with spectation and representation, it seems altogether fitting that Rāma's one real moment of emotional intensity comes in response to a simulation of a tragic event, rather than the real thing.

C. The View from Below

Apart from his obsessive focus on the spectatorial perspective of his principal characters, Rājaśekhara offers a host of minor characters' perspectives on events as well. Each of the ten acts of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* begins with an introductory supporting-scene (*viṣkambhaka*), in which several—usually minor—characters engage in an expository dialogue, giving the viewers necessary information on what has transpired between acts. This is a standard device of Sanskrit drama, but Rājaśekhara, as some critics have noted, makes far more extensive and elaborate use of it than is generally the case. While this has, like much else about Rājaśekhara's work, generally been singled out as grounds for condemnation,[44] it is really one of the most interesting and colorful features of the play. Rājaśekhara's introductory scenes are often virtually acts unto themselves and, far from serving as mere expository devices, they are used to augment the already palpable perspectival bent of the play, and to vastly multiply the range of perspectives through which the events of the drama are viewed. These scenes offer a kind of running commentary on what transpires between the major characters (both on and offstage). In doing so they present a rather extraordinary array of quirky, self-interested, sometimes quite bizarre, and often rather comical points of view on many of the central figures and events in the Indian mytho-historical and literary imaginary. We have already seen, from the depiction of Nārada in the introductory scene of Act II, and from the *rākṣasas*' laughter-filled account of Rāma's exile in Act V, how broadly satirical and

sūtra-dhāra-calad-dāru-gātrêyaṃ yantra-jānakī /
kaṇṭha-stha-śārikâlāpā kṛtā laṅkêśa-kelaye // BR VII.77.

43. The decapitation of a false Sītā is not original to Rājaśekhara's version. It is found, for instance, in King Yaśovarman's (eighth century) *Rāmābhyudaya*—see Raghavan 1961, 18–19. What is new here is precisely the prior history of the imitation Sītā as a device made to fool Rāvaṇa.

44. See, for example, Keith 1924, 232; De and Dasgupta 1947, 456; and Shekhar 1960, 189.

contrary to established literary expectation these perspectives can be. Moreover, Rājaśekhara seems to go out of his way in these scenes to present the viewpoint of the "lower orders"—servants and underlings, who exist in the orbits of the great figures of Indian literature—Rāma, Rāvaṇa, Paraśurāma—but are usually given no voice of their own. A great deal of what makes Rājaśekhara's treatment of the well-worn Rāma narrative truly fresh and interesting is his propensity to display these previously untouched perspectives.

We have already seen some of this in the *rākṣasa* agent's somewhat disparaging critique of Rāvaṇa in Act I, and in the dialogue between Nārada and Bhṛṅgirīti in Act II. The introductory scene of Act III offers what is perhaps the oddest and least predictable commentary of all. We are introduced to Citraśikhaṇḍa and Suvegā, a married vulture couple. Suvegā is expecting, and is overcome with a powerful, pregnancy-driven craving—for *rākṣasa* flesh! Hard to come by, Suvegā says, while the *rākṣasa* king Rāvaṇa holds the whole world in submission. But her husband wonders if this is so: Rāvaṇa's power has so far been unstoppable, but things are changing (BR II.2ff). Citraśikhaṇḍa has heard that young Rāma has attacked and mutilated the *rākṣasa* Tāṭakā and defeated her two sons, and that Rāvaṇa has failed to do anything to avenge them. Questioned about Rāvaṇa's laxity in this matter, he ascribes it to his lovelorn state:

> O Lady Bird, how is it that Rāvaṇa, who disrespects all, endures this disrespect? Really, it's his misery over the separation from Sītā that's to blame for this. The sun is not weakened except by frost.[45]

In the prologue of Act IV, we are introduced to a young Brahmin boy, who is seeking a teacher. He approaches an elder Brahmin, who asks about the boy's background: who was it who gave him his initiation? It turns out that the boy was originally a student of Paraśurāma, the archetypal warrior-Brahmin. He really just wanted to study the Vedas, but instead he's forced to spend all his time learning to distinguish different kinds of arrows and sort them properly. He's grown emaciated from the effort of carrying these war-supplies around, and has run off in the hope of finding a teacher who will actually teach him the scriptures.

Rājaśekhara seems to have a particular interest in exploring the perspective of Rāvaṇa's *rākṣasa* underlings. We have already seen something of the attitude of Rāvaṇa's ministers and spies in the opening scenes of Acts I, V, and VI. Act VII

45. *ayi supattriṇi sarvâvamānī daśânanaḥ katham avamānanāṃ sahate / kiṃtu sītā-viraha-vaidhuryam atrâparādhyati / na vinā himānīm acaṇḍo mārtaṇḍaḥ* / (BR ad III.8).

begins with yet another "view from below." The prologue is a scene between two bards in Rāma's oceanside camp. The one accosts the other:

> My good Candanacaṇḍa! Stop closing your eyes in sleep and come out of your hut! The night has almost turned to dawn!...
> (offstage) Noble Karpūracaṇḍa, this sleeping at dawn is sweet. So, I'll sleep for now.
> Karpūracaṇḍa: Oh, this energy of yours! A king who isn't in the habit of taking counsel, a poet who doesn't look at others' compositions, and a bard who doesn't like to recite will not be happy for long.
> (offstage) Then I'll stay in bed with my eyes closed and do my dawn recitation.[46]

The two bards now alternate in offering up verses in praise or Rāma (one in Sanskrit, the other in Prakrit); but the reluctant bard Candanacaṇḍa does in fact remain in bed throughout the prologue, delivering his verses from offstage. But there is a further twist. After praising for a while, they are interrupted by the entry of a porter:

> (Entering, while tossing his clothes on) Porter: Hey, you stupid bard! What's this noise?
> Karpūracaṇḍa: Sir, we're singing a paean to the heroism and virtue of Lord Rāma.
> Porter: But Lord Rāma has forbidden praise of himself from the time he heard of Daśaratha's ascension to heaven up until Rāvaṇa's own death!
> Karpūracaṇḍaḥ: I am a bard of Vibhīṣaṇa's, a foreigner! So forgive me this one time; I'll give up reciting this paean.[47]

46. *bhadra candanacaṇḍa / parityaja nidrā-mudrāṃ vimuñca nijoṭajâbhyantaraṃ prabhāta-prāyā rajanī...*

nepathye / ajja kappūracaṇḍa esā miṭṭhā prabhādaniddā tā suvissaṃ dāva (= Skt. *ārya karpūracaṇḍa eṣā miṣṭā prabhāta-nidrā tat svapsyāmi tāvat*) /

karpūracaṇḍaḥ */ aho utsāha-śaktir bhavato 'mantraśīlo mahī-patir a-para-prabandha-darśī kavir a-pāṭha-ruciś ca bandī na ciraṃ nandati /*

nepathye / tā ettha saṃttharatthido ṇimīlidaṇayaṇo jevva suppabhādaṃ paṭhissaṃ (= Skt. *tad atra saṃstara-sthito nimīlita-nayana eva suprabhātaṃ paṭhiṣyāmi*) //BR ad VII.1.

47. *praviśya / paṭīkṣepeṇa* ***pratīhāraḥ*** */ re re alika-vaitālika ko 'yam kalakalaḥ /*

karpūracaṇḍaḥ */ ārya rāma-devasya śaurya-guṇa-bhogâvalī gīyate /*

pratīhāraḥ */ nanu rāma-devena niṣiddham ātmôpavarṇanam ā daśaratha-svargârohaṇa-śruter ā-daśa-kaṇṭha-nidhanam /*

karpūracaṇḍaḥ */ vibhīṣaṇa-vaitāliko vaideśiko 'smi / tad eka-vāraṃ marṣaya eṣa tyakto bhogâvalī-pāṭhaḥ /*

BR ad VII.15.

So, ironically, their praise proves to be not only unnecessary but unwelcome. They needn't have bothered to get up after all. And, in a further twist, the bards turn out to be (presumably) yet another pair of *rākṣasa* underlings, who have come over to Rāma's side with their master Vibhīṣaṇa. Again, the focus on subservient characters—the producers, rather than the consumers, of panegyric—and their rather cynical perspective on their own duties, is striking.

In Act VIII the "higher" and "lower" perspectives on the action of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are brought together in a kind of tour de force. The act begins with a fairly standard prologue: yet another pair of *rākṣasa* underlings—by the colorful names of Sumukha ("Good-face") and Durmukha ("Bad-face")—trade comments on the progress of the war and, as usual, are openly critical of their master:

> Sumukha: Hey, friend Durmukha! Rāvaṇa has greatly fallen from his nature, since, even when he's heard of the death of Prince Siṃhanāda, he shows neither grief nor anger, but has merely made a bet on a single combat, on which he's staked the lordship of Laṅkā. But he hasn't given back the abducted Sītā.[48]

Apparently Rāma and Rāvaṇa have agreed to settle their differences through an arranged duel between the monkey-hero Aṅgada and Rāvaṇa's own son Narāntaka. Durmukha, it turns out, has been sent by Trijaṭā (Sītā's *rākṣasī* prison-guard) to learn the outcome. Soon (BR ad VIII.5) they are joined by Trijaṭā herself, too eager to wait for news. Sumukha reports (BR VIII.10) that, even though Aṅgada has killed Narāntaka, Rāvaṇa refused to concede defeat, and has determined to fight. Shocked, Trijaṭā replies, "What! Has the Lord given the Goddess of Shame her last rites?"[49] The three exit, and the act proper begins with the entry of Rāvaṇa, just risen from sleep (*svapnotthitaḥ*), accompanied by a porter and two pairs of servants (Sumukha and Durmukha among them).[50] What follows is a rather extraordinary verbal ballet, as comments pass back and forth within each set of paired servants, and between them and Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa himself seems still not to grasp the gravity of his situation. He is content to sit back and watch the battle, assuming that his son Meghanāda and his brother will easily dispense with Rāma and his simian allies. Sumukha and Durmukha offer

48. ***sumukhaḥ*** */ sakhe durmukha kim api mahān sattva-bhraṃśo rāvaṇasya yat kumāra-siṃhanāda-vadham apy ākarṇya na śokaḥ kṛto nâpy amarṣaḥ kevalam ekaṃ tulā-dyutaṃ pravartitaṃ tatra ca laṅkâdhipatyaṃ sītâpahāritā na punar arpitā.*

49. *kahaṃ ajjeṇa diṇṇo jalañjalī lajjādevīe* (= Skt. *katham āryeṇa datto jalâñjalir lajjā-devyai*).

50. This is the only act of the play in which the characters from the prologue remain onstage throughout the body of the act. It appears to represent something of a breakdown between the "high" and "low" characters represented in the earlier acts and their respective prologues.

a running description of events on the battlefield. Rāvaṇa often falsely concludes that the battle is moving in his favor: on several occasions, seeing Rāma deploy his divine weapons, he takes them to be gods or other forces of nature coming to his own assistance. For example, when he sees Rāma's Agni weapon approaching, he says:

> Since, attached to the limb of Hanumān, he reduced my city of Laṅkā to ash, surely Fire is coming to serve me, to lay to rest his own offense.[51]

Again and again, Sumukha and Durmukha are forced to politely correct his self-serving error. Meanwhile, the other pair of servants, Karaṅkaka and Kaṅkālaka, quietly trade cynical and despairing comments on the *rākṣasas*' increasingly desperate situation. These two seemingly more menial servants are assigned the (surprisingly difficult) task of waking Rāvaṇa's long-sleeping brother Kumbhakarṇa so that he can fight. As they set to work, they offer a grim prognosis:

> Karaṅkaka (aside): Friend Kaṅkālaka! The Lord has Kumbhakarṇa woken up, but not himself. He himself sleeps long, even though Rāma makes an effort to wake him.
> Kaṅkālaka: What other hope is there for us all, without Vibhīṣaṇa?
> Karaṅkaka: Just so:
> To hell with your forest of arms, full of pride in their heroism, and to hell with your sword Candrahāsa! To hell with your heads, which so pleased Śiva when you cut their round necks: since our hope rests on Kumbhakarṇa, whose drive has been destroyed by slumber, who has grown very soft from sleeping all day, who has long forgotten how to use a weapon![52]

51. *anena laṅkā yad akāri mat-purī hanūmato gātra-gatena bhasmasāt /*
nijâparādha-praśamāya tad dhruvaṃ niṣevituṃ mām ayam eti pāvakaḥ // BR VIII.48.

52. ***karaṅkakaḥ*** */ janântikam / sakhe kaṅkālaka devaḥ kumbhakarṇaṃ prabodhayati na punar ātmānaṃ kiṃ ca prayatna-prabodhito 'py asau rāmeṇa dīrghaṃ śāyayitavya eva /*

kaṅkālakaḥ */ kā aṇṇā vibhīṣaṇaṃ vajjia savassa esā gai* (= Skt. *kânyā vibhīṣaṇaṃ varjayitvā sarvasya eṣā gatiḥ*) /

karaṅkakaḥ */ tathâiva /*
dhik śauṇḍīrya-madôddhataṃ bhuja-vanaṃ dhik candra-hāsaṃ ca te
dhik vaktrāṇi nikṛtta-kaṇṭha-valaya-prītêndu-maulīni ca /
nidrā-lāvita-ghasmare pratidinaṃ svāpān mahā-medure
pratyāśā cira-vismṛtâyudha-vidhau yat kumbhakarṇe sthitā // BR VIII.14.

Though nearly all of the many *rākṣasa* characters in the play regularly bad-mouth Rāvaṇa behind his back, Karaṅkaka and Kaṅkālaka take things to a new level in this area. It would be hard, I think, anywhere in Sanskrit dramatic literature, to find servants making a comparably harsh set of critiques of their own king and master.

After a series of increasingly farcical efforts to rouse Kumbhakarṇa (involving the elephants who preside over the cardinal directions [BR VIII.26], and a horde of divine women [BR VIII.34–35]), they finally manage to wake him. When he hears why he has been summoned, he is impressed:

> No mother in the world has borne another such jewel of a son as
> this Rāma, who has constructed the line of a bridge in the salt-ocean!
> I think even the Lord of the *rākṣasa*s is afraid of him: otherwise,
> why would he have his servants interrupt my sleep for no reason?[53]

Karaṅkaka, thinking it perhaps unwise to pass *this* message on to Rāvaṇa, substitutes something more suitably patriotic:

> (Thinking) Let's leave aside this speech, which the naturally irascible Rāvaṇa didn't hear anyway; we wouldn't ever want it to be [like] the story of Vibhīṣaṇa! (aloud) What does Kumbhakarṇa say?—
>
> "Never mind the bow! And furthermore, enough of these discuses and *bhuśuṇḍī*s! Let these floods of spears and hammers be! By swallowing up the fleeing monkey-army, I will both satisfy my hunger and destroy the enemy."[54]

Encouraged by this (apparently fabricated) message from his brother, Rāvaṇa sends him off to battle, though he himself still only watches. It is only at the very end of the act, when he has seen both his brother and his son killed, that he is again roused to action. As with the mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā in Act V, it is only the destruction of his family members that can rouse him from his lethargy.

53. *sūte nânyaṃ jagati jananī tādṛśaṃ putra-ratnaṃ rāmo yādṛg lavaṇa-jaladhau setu-sīmanta-kāraḥ.*

śaṅke śaṅkāṃ vahati ca tato rākṣasêndro 'py akāṇḍe nidrā-bhaṅgaḥ katham itarathā kāritaḥ kiṅkarair me // BR VIII.36.

54. *vicintya / tad aśrutam evâitat prakṛti-roṣaṇena rāvaṇena vacanam āstāṃ mā kadācana vibhīṣaṇa-vṛttāntaḥ syāt / prakāśam / kim āha kumbhakarṇaḥ /*

āstāṃ dhanuḥ kim api nâparato bhuśuṇḍī-cakrair alaṃ bhavatu paṭṭiśa-mudgarâughaiḥ /
dhāvat-plavaṅga-pṛtanā-kavala-krameṇa prāpsyāmy ahaṃ suhitatāṃ ca ripu-kṣayaṃ ca // BR VIII.37.

And again, the very moment Rāvaṇa ceases being a mere spectator and springs into action, the playwright's attention abruptly turns away.

D. The View from Above

After the events of Act VIII, we will see no more of Rāvaṇa onstage. His climactic battle with Rāma will be presented, not directly, but once again through the medium of a set of spectators. The principal figure in Act IX is Daśaratha, now even further reduced (or elevated) to the role of pure spectator. He is dead now, we learn, though this seems to have remarkably little impact on his lifestyle. Now, as before, he spends his time in heaven, with his friend Indra, watching what goes on below. It is from this god's eye perspective that he witnesses his son's climactic battle with Rāvaṇa. As usual, we do not witness the battle at all, but only its spectators.

This act too begins with a subaltern perspective on the action. The prologue presents a conversation between two minor functionaries of the god of death. They complain of being overwhelmed now by the great business Rāma's war with the *rākṣasa*s has brought them. One of them, Citragupta, has been assigned the task of compiling a list of the names of all the dead. He enters, carrying a huge book, and complaining of the ache in his fingers from all the writing he has had to do (BR IX.5ff). After he and his companion trade a few remarks on the state of the war, and he reads off a portion of his list (BR IX.6–17), the two head off to return to their duties.

The act proper begins with the entry of Daśaratha, Indra, and a *cāraṇa* couple (the latter are divine musicians and singers who attend on Indra and the other gods). They have come in Indra's flying chariot to watch, from a heavenly vantage point, the climactic battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa soon to take place on the earth below. While they, of course, have a fine view of the action, the viewers of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, in accord with the by now familiar pattern, will witness it only indirectly, through the reactions of this internal audience.

The general mood in Indra's chariot seems rather like what one would expect for a sporting event or other such spectacle. Daśaratha of course has strong personal feelings about the battle, but the nameless *cāraṇa* couple, which speaks much of the dialogue and very much sets the tone of the act, seems to have been introduced precisely to serve as a disinterested audience. It is quite clear from their reactions that for them the battle is basically a form of entertainment. They display a certain vicarious excitement and occasional nervousness about the outcome, but they are also quite lighthearted, frequently laughing and joking about what they see. For instance, when they see Rāma cut off the first of

Rāvaṇa's ten heads, the female *cāraṇa* laughs and says: "From now on we'll call the Ten-faced One 'Nine-faced'!"[55] Ultimately, of course, Rāma prevails over Rāvaṇa, and the *cāraṇa* woman laughs again as she sees the celebratory rain of flowers dropped down upon the victorious Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa (BR ad IX.57). The act ends with the male *cāraṇa* offering his congratulations to the proud father of the winner and his good friend Indra.

The tenth and final act of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (like the final acts of Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita* and Murāri's *Anargharāghava*) is devoted chiefly to portraying Rāma and Sītā's journey from Laṅkā back to Ayodhyā in Rāvaṇa's flying chariot Puṣpaka. The return to Ayodhyā via the Puṣpaka-vimāna was regularly dealt with, at least from the time of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*, as a touristic episode, as Rāma and Sītā take in an aerial view of the places they have seen and lived during their exiles, and other noteworthy sites of Bhāratavarṣa. It is thus quite naturally in keeping with the overall spectatorial theme of Rājaśekhara's play.

The prologue takes the form of a dialogue between the cities of Laṅkā and Alakā (personified as female—this too is similar to what we find in the final acts of the *Mahāvīracarita* and the *Anargharāghava*).[56] It is through their dialogue that we learn of Sītā's ordeal by fire after Rāma has rejected her, and of their reunion after the fire has certified her as pure. The two cities then set off to "experience the joy of seeing Rāma."[57] It is just after she has completed her ordeal that we see Sītā, accompanied by Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, her *rākṣasī* maid/prison guard Trijaṭā, Hanūmān and the monkey king Sugrīva, all riding in the Puṣpaka on their way back to Ayodhyā. At first Sītā is, understandably, somewhat subdued, but as their journey progresses, her mood visibly lightens. And this lightening of her mood seems clearly to be linked with the ascent of the Puṣpaka. As she approaches the heavenly vantage point of the spectators in the preceding act, she too is able to look down at the events that have occurred below without fear or sorrow. In retrospect, they can even be seen as comic. As Rāma points out to her, from high above, the sights of the battlefield on which he has just fought to win her freedom, she questions him:

> Sītā (laughing): But, does My Lord know who *that* is?
> (Rāma is embarrassed. They are all reminded.)
> Sugrīva: O Lady of Mithilā! This is the younger brother of Laṅkā's lord [that is Kumbhakarṇa], whose huge headless trunk, cast into

55. *tā ajja pahudi dasāṇaṇaṃ ṇavāṇaṇaṃ vāharissāmo* (= Skt. *tad adya-prabhṛti daśānanaṃ navānanaṃ vyāhariṣyāmaḥ*) BR ad IX.39.

56. Alakā is the city of Kubera, the god of wealth (from whom the Puṣpaka was stolen by Rāvaṇa), to which it returns after dropping Rāma and Sītā off in Ayodhyā.

57. *rāma-bhadra-darśana-sukham anubhavāvaḥ*—BR ad X.16.

the ocean, looks like another bridge made of mountains. When even the touch of fear was removed from them by the pouring forth of the blood from the nose of this sleepy, bald, extremely pot-bellied drunkard, the gods were made to laugh quietly.

Sītā: My Lord makes even the gods watch his comic play![58]

And immediately, as if in response to Sītā's playful banter, Rāma drives the chariot still higher:

Rāma (smiling slightly, to the Puṣpaka): Hey, King of Sky-chariots! Leave off this course near to the earth and go a bit higher. Sītā is eager to achieve a god's-eye view! (acting out an upward course)

O Lady with the curved limbs! As the Puṣpaka, taking on speed, climbs up to the summit of the sky, the earth, surrounded by vast coils of ocean, seems to grow small![59]

As they rocket skyward, the earth, and all that has happened there, recede into the distance. Rāma and Sītā, surveying the sites of their past acts from their now elevated vantage point, in effect become spectators of their own lives. And, at this remove, the emotional weight of the past is suddenly lifted.

In this way, the ultimate perspective of Rāma and Sītā seems to mirror that of the play itself. The *Bālarāmāyaṇa* too looks back over a long expanse of literary history, and does so with what seems a new kind of humor, in doing so, manages to present this most familiar of stories in an entirely new perspective. Distance lightens. The "*Young Rāmāyaṇa*" seems to look back on its predecessors with a light heart and a playful eye. By playing as he does with multiple,

58. ***sītā*** */ vihasya / ajjautto jāṇadi ko uṇa eso (= Skt. ārya-putro jānāti kaḥ punar eṣaḥ) /*
rāmo lajjate / sarve smaryante /
sugrīvaḥ */*
laṅkêndrânuja eṣa maithili mahān yo 'yaṃ kabandhaḥ puro vārāṃ bhartari śaila-setur aparaḥ proto yathā rājate /
nidrālor atitundilasya khalateḥ kṣībasya ghoṇāsṛjām oghenâsya bhaya-spṛśo 'pi nibhṛtaṃ svarvâsino hāsitāḥ // BR X.21
sītā */ ajjautteṇa devā vi ppahasaṇaṇaṭṭaṃ pekkhāvidā* (= Skt. *ārya-putreṇa devā api prahasana-nāṭyaṃ prekṣāyitāḥ*).

59. ***rāmaḥ*** */ kiṃcit smitvā puṣpakaṃ prati / haṃho vimāna-rāja / vimucya vasudhā-savidha-varttinīṃ gatiṃ kiṃcid uccair bhava kutūhalinī jānakī divya-darśana-vyatikarasya /*
ūrdhva-gati-nāṭitakena /
rāmaḥ */*
yathā yathā rohati baddha-vegaṃ vyomnaḥ śikhāṃ puṣpakam ānatâṅgi /
mahâmbudhīnāṃ valayair viśālais tathā tathā saṅkucatîva pṛthvī // BR X.22.

shifting perspectives, and with so many forms of mediated representation—plays, paintings, shape-shifting impostors, and animatronic models—Rājaśekhara is able to place his drama and its audience at a remove from the principal iconic scenes of Vālmīki's archetypal *Rāmāyaṇa* and from its normally revered and deified central character, while still adhering to the basic lines of Vālmīki's narrative. This enables him to bring into his own treatment of the Rāma story a level of humor, veering at times into parody or farce, that would almost certainly otherwise have been controversial or off-putting. Rājaśekhara's version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is an unapologetically secondary, mediated treatment; it is not able to rival or take the place of Vālmīki's archetypal version, and is in no way intended to do so. Indeed, it depends for its emotional effect precisely on its ability to play off of the viewer's (or reader's) presumably thorough knowledge of the original. In its play with multiple perspectives and levels of representation, it frees itself of the weight of its considerable literary past, and turns what had already become, by Rājaśekhara's time, the Indian tradition's prototypical tale of pathos, into a matter for unrestrained and decidedly irreverent play.

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16

Murāri's Depths

David Shulman

A. Introducing the *Anargharāghava*

Murāri, they say, went his own way (*murāres tṛtīyaḥ panthāḥ*). Everyone who reads him will confirm this judgment: he is truly different, a maverick among the great medieval poets. The anthologists clearly admired him: the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* alone quotes 57 of his poems.[1] *Alaṅkāra* writers cite him, though relatively rarely.[2] Many commentaries on the *Anargharāghava* (*AR*) exist, some of the best of them stemming from the greater Kaliṅga region (Orissa and the Andhra delta) which, in all likelihood, was the poet's own home territory.[3]

1. This may be one of several indications that Murāri belongs to eastern India. Of the 57, 49 are from *AR*; the rest include stray encomia attributed to some Murāri (several in a style very close to that of the play).

2. For example, Ruyyaka 53 (*pariṇāma*); Appaya Dīkṣita, *Kuvalayânanda* 52 (*dṛṣṭânta*).

3. For a synopsis of what is known on this issue, see Steiner 1997, 12–15; von Stietencron 1978, 15–16, 66–67; Warder 1988, 24–25. Among the commentators, Rucipati, of uncertain date and location, has achieved a certain pre-eminence. Important commentators from Andhra include Lakṣmīdhara (*Iṣṭârthakalpavalli*, sixteenth century) and Harihara (*Hariharadīkṣitīya*, fifteenth century). For Murāri's date, see discussion by Steiner 1997; Lévi 1963, 277. In a nutshell, we can say that he is later than Bhavabhūti and earlier than Dhanika (late-tenth century), who cites *AR* 3.21 (comm. to *Daśarūpaka* 2.1); and that he is in certain ways very close to Rājaśekhara, who was possibly his junior contemporary (see later). Maṅkha 25.74 mentions Rājaśekhara as following closely upon Murāri. Murāri's awareness of the somewhat parochial Śaiva sites in the Godāvarī region (7.103–04) supports the argument for an eastern, probably Kaliṅgan, provenance.

For all this, the *Anargharāghava* remains a somewhat forbidding work. A venerable tradition of western Indologists, from Wilson through Warder, takes it as exemplifying the very worst in Sanskrit poetry.[4] We can, I think, spare ourselves a rehearsal of their complaints.

But can we define whatever it is that makes Murāri so different? It is easy enough, but unsatisfactory, to talk of complexity, of peculiar syntax, of bizarre tropes (and tropes within tropes), of the rather anti-dramatic stringing out of anything potentially dramatic, in the most superficial sense; but we would like to go a little deeper, to attempt an analytic characterization. Fortunately, Murāri himself can help—for of all the major poets and playwrights, he is, perhaps, the most given to meta-poetic and self-reflective comments. Take, for example, the following, which could easily serve as a succinct statement of this author's understanding of poetic language:

davīyasyo dūrād apatham iha câmutra ca śucāṃ
trivedī-vākyānām anaticira-bhagnā iva khilāḥ/
śruti-grāhyaṃ jyotiḥ kim-api bahir-antar-mala-muṣo
mṛjāyā majjānaḥ kva nu vipariyanti dvija-giraḥ// 3.19

Farther than far, a dead-end to all sorrow
in this world and that one,
like a wasteland newly ploughed
from the triple Veda,
a mysterious light that we can hear,
that removes all stain, inside and out,
the true heart of polished purity—
such are the words of a Brahmin
that never err.

Here is the context. Viśvāmitra, with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in tow, has arrived at Janaka's court. Janaka has only one thing on his mind: he wants to find a bridegroom for Sītā, and he seems to regret having laid down the impossible condition (*paṇa, paṇa-bandha*) that the candidate has to string Śiva's bow—especially now that Rāma, the perfect match, stands before him (3.25). Viśvāmitra, in the course of the opening courtesies—and Murāri, it should be said, is the great master of hypnotic, hypotactic, conspicuously alliterative *politesse*—blesses his host: very soon Janaka will be able to fulfil this vow of his (*kātyāyanī-kāmuka-karmukâropaṇa-paṇa-praṇaya-pravīṇena tu duhituḥ patyā sampraty aparyuṣita-pratijño bhūyāḥ*). At first, Janaka is encouraged by these

4. Warder 1988, 32 and 39, eventually summing up the *AR* as a "poor and imitative play."

words of blessing: they are, he says, like a collocation of all the *sāmans*, wiping out internal and external misery (*samasyā vā sāmnāṃ bahir-abahir-aṃhaḥ-parimṛjām*: note the Vedic term *aṃhas* and the root (*pari*)-*mṛj*, as in Verse 19 earlier); or they are a conversation (*saṃvāda*) among all *ṛks*, a capital investment (*paripaṇa*) of *yajus* verses—in short, Viśvāmitra's statement, which will bear fruit in many domains (*bahu-viṣaya-sâkṣāt-kṛta-phalaḥ*), has already produced Sītā's bridegroom right before Janaka's eyes.[5] Viśvāmitra responds with the verse I have quoted.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, incidentally, are quietly listening to this conversation. Rāma whispers to Lakṣmaṇa that when great sages speak to one another, we, who overhear them, realize that they provide a foundation to existence by calling up Vedic utterances; beyond that, we cannot fully understand their powers; only they can recognize and know one another.[6] Vedic resonances dominate this passage and continue throughout Act 3 (indeed, throughout the play). Viśvāmitra's meta-poetic Verse 19, which we have quoted, emerges from this frame.

It, too, is laden with Vedic overtones. The opening phrase, *davīyasyo dūrāt*, sounds almost Upaniṣadic.[7] *Pāda* 2 has exercised the commentators considerably; what does Murāri mean when he says this kind of language constitutes *khilas* to the three *Vedas*? We can remain in the textual and linguistic domain and read *khila* as "a space not filled up, gap, that which serves to fill up a gap, supplement (of a book, and so on), additional hymn appended to the regular collection" (MW). Why, then, are these supplements *an-aticira-bhagna*? Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa (early fifteenth century), certainly one of the most perceptive readers of Murāri, glosses *saṃnihita-kāla evâvyavahṛtāḥ*, "not recently in use," and goes on to explain that blessings of this sort are rare and come only from the mouths of highly auspicious people, not just anybody. Or it could be that in the absence of anyone to use or pronounce them, their tradition is broken (*vicchinna-saṃpradāyāḥ*). Rucipati, possibly the oldest commentator, says *tat-kāla-kṛṣṭāḥ*, "recently ploughed"—referring *khila* to its ancient meaning as "a piece of waste or uncultivated land situated between cultivated fields, desert, bare soil" (MW).[8] In either case we seem to have a notion of filling in or actualizing an empty slot or of adding on to a still incomplete domain, and of doing so in the Vedic manner that also does

5. *samasyā vā sāmnāṃ bahir-abahir-aṃhaḥ-parimṛjām*
ṛcāṃ vā saṃvādaḥ kim-api yajuṣāṃ vā paripaṇaḥ/
tvad-āśīr-vādo 'yaṃ bahu-viṣaya-sâkṣāt-kṛta-phalo
varaṃ me vatsāyāḥ prathayati puro-vartinam iva// 3.18

6. *smaranti lokârtham amī kila śrutīr iti pratiṣṭhām adhi-gantum īśmahe/*
paraṃ yad eṣāṃ punar asti vaibhavaṃ tad eta eva vyati-vidrate yadi// 3.17.

7. Cf. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.20.

8. Steiner also prefers this reading: see her note on this passage (150). Cf. Dharmakīrti's verse preserved in *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1729 (*khilatāṃ gataḥ*).

away with sorrow and impurity arising from within or without. If we stick to Rucipati's reading, we end up with just the kind of incongruous juxtaposition of linguistic-figurative registers that is so typical of the *Veda* itself.

Two further elements are stressed in the second half of the verse. First, this kind of language, Brahminical speech, is a splendid (*kim-api*) condensation of light—a luminous burst that we hear rather than see (*śruti-grāhyam*). Poetic utterance has both an aural and a visual dimension.[9] We could gloss over this description were it not for its strategic placement in a reflexive context of great salience. The poet is not speaking about the *Veda tout court*. He is telling us something about himself, perhaps hinting both at the elaborate praxis of "three-dimensional" poetry that he has inherited from his predecessors and at a more specific, local cultic setting that could be called proto-Tantric. We have to remember that the *AR* was, by its own account, set in a temple *yātrā*. Second, the words in question have an aspect of essence, literally marrow (*majjānaḥ*), apparently compacting within themselves much wider or looser levels of speech in a process of *mṛjā*, cleaning, purifying, wiping, rubbing or, perhaps closest to Murāri's meaning, "polishing." Words that constitute the "essence of polishing" never go astray (*vipariyanti*). Very strikingly, Śatānanda, Janaka's *purohita* who is present in this conversation, immediately says to himself: "Viśvāmitra, who wants Rāma to become Janaka's son-in-law, is beguiling Janaka over and over again with these crooked statements" (*nūnaṃ rāma-bhadram eva jāmātaram abhi-saṃdhāya bhagavān ayaṃ punaḥ punar vakroktibhiḥ sīra-dhvajaṃ parimohayate*). As so often in Murāri, a meta-poetic note, precisely worded (here: *vakrokti*), dominates and explains the dramatic setting.

Highly charged utterances, "newly ploughed," very subtle (*davīyasyaḥ*) yet visible through the ear, reminiscent of the *Veda*, bringing the *Veda* to completion, act effectively in or on the world through a process of polishing. To realize the full impact of this statement, we need to note Murāri's particular usage of the term *mṛjā*, which occurs repeatedly in a highly specific context. Murāri has a fondness for the story of Saṃjñā, the first wife of Sūrya, the sun-god; unable to bear the fierce brightness of her husband, she fled from his embrace and left in her place a dark substitute, Chāyā; Sūrya, longing for his first wife, underwent emergency surgery on the lathe of his father-in-law, Viśvakarmā, artisan of the gods, who cut away large parts (some say: one-eighth) of Sūrya's splendor so that

9. Murāri gives us a playful expansion of this idea in 7.79: Vibhīṣaṇa assures Rāma that Ādiśeṣa, the thousand-headed king of the snakes in the underworld, will have the pleasure of hearing Rāma's praises with all of his 2000 **eyes** (since snakes are *cakṣuḥ-śravas*: their eyes serve as ears) when the Nāginīs sing in the snake assemblies; while poor Indra, although he is Sahasrākṣa, will have to make do with two miserable ears.

Saṃjñā could live with him again.[10] For Murāri, this story is part of a general fascination with solar themes (perhaps another Orissan feature). He may have taken it in the first instance from Kālidāsa: [*avanti-nātho 'yam...*] *āropya cakra-bhramam uṣṇa-tejās/ tvaṣṭreva yantrollikhito vibhāti.*[11] Murāri refers to the Sūrya-Saṃjñā theme toward the end of Act 1, twice in Act 2, and again in 7.85. Let us first look briefly at the two references in the second act (2.6 and 2.80), which effectively frame this entire episode—the slaying of Tāṭakā—from dawn to nightfall.

B. Polishing the Sun

It is early morning, just before sunrise. Śunaḥśepa, Viśvāmitra's pupil, describes what he sees in the eastern sky by an intricate *utprekṣā*:

pratyāsanna-surendra-sindhura-śiraḥ-sindūra-sāndrâruṇā
yat-tejas-trasa-reṇavo viyad itaḥ prācīnam ātanvate/
*śaṅke saṃprati yāvad abhyudayate tat tarku-ṭaṅk**onmṛjā**-*
rajyad-bimba-rajaś-chaṭā-valayito devas tviṣām īśvaraḥ// 2.6.

Atoms of light are spreading through the eastern sky, stained deep red
by the powder on Airāvata's head as he stands
at his nearby post. Wrapped in a cloud of sparks and dust,
the regal sun, honed to a red-hot glow on the Blacksmith's lathe,
is (I think) soon to rise.

What Śunaḥśepa is seeing is the moment when Tvaṣṭṛ put his son-in-law on the grindstone and pared away or polished this recalcitrant, hyper-luminous orb (*bimba*). As the stone turns, splinters of light scatter spark-like into the sky in a cloud of dust (*rajaś-chaṭā*), and the sun's own heated and refinished body glows red—somewhere just beneath the horizon. Apparently, Tvaṣṭṛ works best at night. Perhaps this moment happens every night, in the minutes before dawn. In any case, the entire process, the heart of the *utprekṣā*, is *unmṛjā*, "polishing," like *mṛjā* in 3.19. Once we have the verse before us, we should take a moment to observe its syntax. Notice the two long compounds, each equivalent to what would otherwise be a subordinate clause or clauses; the complex enjambment between *pada*s **c** and **d**, the *pāda*-boundary remaining internal to the *samāsa*;

10. The story, which goes back the Vedic myth of Saraṇyū and Savarṇā, has been elaborately discussed by Doniger (2000). Only Sūrya's feet were left untouched by Viśvakarmā; hence they are hidden in boots in classical *mūrti*s from the Kushana period on.

11. *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.32 (Mallinātha reads *yatnollikhita* for *yantrollikhita*).

the elliptic relative clause (*tat* apparently swallowing up the correlative we should expect in what is, surprisingly, an almost colloquial anacoluthon);[12] and the pregnant placement of the shifter, *itaḥ*—one of Murāri's signatures, a true hallmark of his style. Stated more generally, a strong naturalistic description, in complex hypotaxis carried mostly by composita, moves into what is, in effect, a self-contained narrative sequence that simultaneously explains and "transfigures" the verse's visual content. Murāri specializes in such patterns of intricately compacted, dynamic sequences.

Now look at 2:80. This same day, including the troublesome business of killing Tāṭakā, is over, Rāma is reaching the end of a complex, 12-verse-long soliloquy on the moon, to which we will return. His ultimate conclusion about what is going on in the sky conforms perfectly, both verbally and conceptually, with the day-break verse just examined:

rucibhir abhitas ṭaṅkotkīrṇair iva trasa-reṇubhir
yad uḍubhir api chedaiḥ sthūlair iva bhriyate nabhaḥ/
prakṛti-malino bhāsvad-bimbonmṛjā-kṛta-karmaṇas
tad ayam api hi tvaṣṭuḥ kunde[13] *bhaviṣyati candramāḥ//*

The sky is dotted with rays that are like atoms of light
that the grinding-stone showers, and the stars
are somewhat larger, spark-like chunks.[14]
It seems the Blacksmith has just finished
polishing and paring away the sun, and the moon,
dark by nature, is next in line.

Trasa-reṇu, ṭaṅk(otkīrṇa), un-mṛjā—all repeat from 2.6, as a moon-lit nightfall recalls the moment before dawn. The *utprekṣā* comes through clearly with the conjectural future, *bhaviṣyati* (a distinctive usage).[15] Tvaṣṭṛ is hard at work again; the moon, with its conspicuous spot or stain, is a perfect candidate for his art of cutting, cleaning, polishing. What we see in the sky is no more than the luminous residue of this craft, the bits and pieces of light scattered by the lathe as it turns. Light, as we know it, is an artisan's gift; and the artisan is hard at work, at least

12. I prefer to read *yat-tejas**, with Rāmacandra Miśra, as *yasya tejas** rather than *yat* as opening a causal relative clause, though Murāri does have a certain predilection for the latter syntagma. Note also *yāvad* + present for incipient action. Murāri's marked penchant for "colloquial" syntax (especially anacoluthon and asyndeton: for example, 5.26) is one element in his severe hypotaxis.

13. v.l. *kūṭe*: Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa.

14. Rucipati suggests that the larger chunks are from the moon, which "must already be" (*bhaviṣyati*) on the lathe.

15. *saṃbhāvanāyāṃ lṛṭ*: Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa.

twice a day, producing this sparkling result, which also fills up the otherwise empty or unstructured space of the sky.[16]

Murāri has a compelling interest in this process in both its technical or processual aspect—the sense of craftsmanship and what it can achieve—and its spatial, cosmo-geometric aspect. He seems to love the notion of opening up, molding, filling, and illuminating space, for he returns to it again and again, almost as if each time he wishes to reimagine a new part of the Rāma story he first must create, by his own poetic and linguistic efforts, a space in which this piece of the narrative can take place.[17] In fact, his use of the Saṃjñā-Sūrya theme extends easily into the domain of poetic, charged language. Thus in 1.34, Daśaratha, after a rather long and exhausting exercise in courtly niceties (as he himself acknowledges), has finally worked up to the point where he can ask the visiting Viśvāmitra what has brought him to his court. Here is what Daśaratha says, hoping to elicit from Viśvāmitra a concrete request, still blissfully unaware of what that request might be:

etābhis tava kautukoktibir api traividya-mūrter iva
tvaṣṭasyâmara-śilpinā dinakṛto 'vaccheda-vedâkṣaraiḥ/
pūtāḥ smo vayam adya yady api tad apy ājñām api syām aho
voḍhuṃ viṣṭir an-arghatā raghu-kule kalpântam unmīlatu//

Even though we have already been rendered pure
by Your Excellency's intriguing words, which are the very syllables
of the Veda pared away from Sūrya's body that is the Veda entire
by the divine Craftsman himself, still, could we but be
an indentured laborer poised to carry out your next command,
then and only then would worthiness without price
endure in Raghu's line until the end of time.

Next comes Viśvāmitra's devastating demand, also stated, it goes without saying, in elevated and flattering tones and a vast flurry of words, many of them rather arcane (like *viṣṭi*, corvée labor, or *tvaṣṭa* = *taṣṭa* < *tvakṣ*, in our verse). Unwittingly, Daśaratha has recalled to the minds of his audience the title of the play in which he is performing (*an-arghatā*, the "pricelessness" to which he aspires). We can be sure that Murāri was perfectly aware of this effect. But in the present context, what interests us is, again, the seemingly inescapable moment when Tvaṣṭṛ, here the paradigmatic *śilpin*, slices away whole pieces of the sun; and these pieces are none other than the words Viśvāmitra speaks—perhaps the words that all of us speak, in so far as we approach the level of intensity and

16. For the theme of filling up empty space, see section E below.

17. See, for example, the opening verses of Act 4 and discussion of 2.68–83 later in this essay.

efficacy that we call "Vedic." The sun is *traividya-mūrti*, composed of the *Veda*, and language—language that matters—is the collection of chips and splinters that a skilled artisan has produced from out of this fiery corpus. There is every reason to think that this is precisely how Murāri viewed himself—as embodying the ideal of the *śilpin*, a craftsman hewing and cutting and polishing the incandescent stuff of speech. That, in a single, recurrent image, is what a poet does.[18] It is also very striking that a link is forged between Vedic speech and the crafting of poetic utterance; not pure, visionary inspiration but the artisan's ability to shape and polish is what raises language to the level or pitch of Vedic utterance. There is also a highly concrete, tangible, three-dimensional aspect to the poet's task, somewhat reminiscent of the sculptor's; a verse produced in this manner reveals a plasticity of verbal substance, which has been shaped into a self-contained, complete reality, alive with internal movement.

Finally, in Act 7, in the course of the heroes' zig-zag, sub-lunar flight over all of India on their way home to Ayodhyā, the poet returns to Tvaṣṭṛ's surgical enterprise:

tarku-ṭaṅka-likhitârka-maṇḍala-procchalat-kaṇa-kadamba-bhāsuram/
śilpa-śālam iva viśvakarmaṇaḥ kiṃ vibhāti mṛga-tṛṣṇikā-mayam// 7.85

What is this we see, so full of light?
Is it a mirage of Viśvakarmā's forge
where sparks fly off the body of the Sun
as he lies down for a trim
on the artisan's lathe?

Rāma is speaking, peering down in the darkness. He fails to identify the strange glow he sees rising from the earth, though the image of the craftsman paring away the sun springs very readily to mind. Vibhīṣaṇa, however, offers a more "realistic" explanation:

jyeṣṭhā-mūlīya-yātrā-sarabhasa-karabhī-kāmya-kāntāra-vartmā
dūre 'pi jyotir akṣṇor apalapati marur jājvalaj-jāṅgala-śrīḥ/
viṣvadrīcībhir asmin nibiḍam uḍu-pateḥ kāntibhiḥ prasnuvānāḥ
phenāyante nijoṣma-kvathana-pariṇamad-budbudaṃ[19] *candra-kāntāḥ//* 7.86

What blinds our eyes is the brilliant glow of the wilderness, seen from afar,
where camel-cows eagerly wind their way through the summer's thick thorns

18. Note the complex emjambment here, and the opaque node of adjacent shifters—[*adya*] *yady apy tad api* —at a critical transition, so characteristic of this style.

19. V.l. *nijoṣma-kvathana-pariṇamad-budbudāś.*

and the moon-stones, melted by the moon-beams scattering
in all directions and then brought to a boil by this fierce heat,
bubble over with white froth.

From above, it must be a rather grand sight, this desert bubbling in the moonlight; the partly naturalistic, partly surreal description of an external, visible landscape replaces the imagined figure of the craftsman slicing away chunks of the sun. Nonetheless, the transition should interest us. As we will see, Murāri repeatedly focuses on processes of perception—here the brilliance of the wilderness literally robs the eyes of their own, natural light (*jyotis*)—and we find in the *AR* a persistent linkage between the image or idea of the skilled artisan, plying his craft, and the perceptual world which might or might not allow a sensitive observer to see something extraordinary. In particular, the poet's heightened perception has the potential to *transfigure* the sensory field; in this, the poet joins the craftsman or assimilates the latter's special gift. We can see something of the effect this produces in the final two *pāda*s of this verse, which take the standard notion of the liquefied moon-stones to a new, almost grotesque limit; they are not merely melted down by moonlight but actually brought to a boil. Murāri is an expressionist, continually pushing our perceptual habits beyond familiar surface forms.

At the same time, as usual with Murāri, the verse offers keen observational details. The Puṣpaka-vimāna seems to be hovering somewhere over Ramnad District in southern Tamil Nadu—a bleak desert landscape, dessicated, thorny, unbearably hot for everyone except the camels. I deduce this both from the description itself and, more important, from the verse that follows immediately, in which Rāma catches sight of Siṃhala-dvīpa (7.87)—incidentally, *not* the site of Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā, which is described in a set of much earlier verses, shortly after take-off.[20] We also learn that this return flight to Ayodhyā is taking place in the month of Jyaiṣṭha (May-June), so that the Laṅkā war and the slaying of Rāvaṇa are now firmly situated in "real" time. Such hard, grounded information, precisely reported, is a dependable and necessary component in Murāri's expressionist reimagining of the world.

Already at this early point in our discussion, we can define a certain pattern. Verse 7.86 bears Murāri's signature. A three-fold process unfolds as we study the poem: 1) It begins with precisely observed, naturalistic details (characteristically compressed into a single *samāsa* that comprises all of *pāda* ***a***). *Pāda* ***b*** fills in this initial picture, enhancing it with hypnotic aural effects, and extending it in the direction of a statement about the nature of visual perception. There is no

20. It is possible that for Murāri, as for some other south Indian authors, "Laṅkā" refers to the islands in the Godāvarī-Kṛṣṇā estuary, thus in Kaliṅga.

"padding": each linguistic element, indeed every syllable, is working hard. 2) The second half of the verse then takes hold of a conventional poetic topos—the melting moon-stones—and pushes it far beyond earlier usage, intensifying it almost to absurdity. 3) In so doing, the poet effectively reframes this same conventional idea; at the same time, he exposes its "given-ness" as possibly artificial, comments on it, adds a touch of potential irony and distance, and reintegrates the image into the natural scene. By the time we have deciphered one of these complex Murāri verses, we often find ourselves smiling at the boldness and playfulness of the invention. Among the great Sanskrit poets, Murāri may have the best sense of humor.

C. A Poet's Craft

The poet, like Tvaṣṭṛ, like other artists, shapes, chisels, moulds, pares away excess, opens up a structured space in which perceptual change can transpire. A somewhat new image or paradigm is emerging, one seemingly disconnected from a notion of inspired genius. Sarasvatī, whom Murāri acknowledges in 1.11, in the prologue, is a bold, uninhibited chatterbox (*nitya-pragalbha-vācalā)* who dances at the crossroads (*śṛṅgāṭaka*) formed by Brahmā's four heads. As Rucipati remarks, this description would hold good for a courtesan (*paṇya-strī*), as suits Sarasvatī's unfettered, and perhaps rather fickle, character. Murāri himself could be said to be both *pragalbha* and *vācala*, but not because Sarasvatī speaks through him. Rather, he bases his claim on knowledge, proficiency, and training, as we see in a very well-known verse (quoted by Appaya Dīkṣita, among others)[21] that is not, however, found in all manuscripts of the *AR*:

devīṃ vācam upāsate hi bahavas sāraṃ tu sārasvatam
jānīte nitarām asau guru-kula-kliṣṭo murāriḥ kaviḥ/
abdhir langhita eva vānara-bhaṭaiḥ kiṃ tv asya gambhīratām
āpātāla-nimagna-pīvara-tanur jānāti manthâcalaḥ//

Many pay worship to the goddess of speech,
but only I, the poet Murāri, after suffering through
years of study in my teacher's house,
know her deeper truth.
The monkey-warriors managed to cross the sea,
but only the mountain used to churn it,

21. Appayya Dīkṣita, *Kuvalayânanda* 52.

the one reaching down to the nether world,
knows its depths.[22]

Whether Murāri composed this verse or not, it beautifully states his poetic ethos. To become a poet one has to suffer in the guru's house for many years. Then one knows what to do, and even then, if we take the illustration (*dṛṣṭânta*) seriously, composing a verse may be a long and exhausting business of "churning," of turning the raw stuff of language into the creamy elixir of artistic expression. What is more, this process is seen as aiming at depth (*gambhīratā*), another key concept in the *AR*.[23] Murāri thinks of his poetry as "deep." But what does this mean? "Deep" in what sense? Can we characterize his oeuvre in a manner congruent with, and adequate to, his professed ideal?

Before we move into this mode, we need to fill in the contours of Murāri's several self-portraits, which we can perhaps extrapolate from his frequent depictions of artists at work. The topic interests him. Sometimes work proceeds according to a pre-existing blueprint. Look at the second poem in our text, which sets out a paradigm for this theme:

viramati mahākalpe nābhi-pathaika-niketanas
tribhuvana-puraḥ śilpī yasya pratikṣaṇam ātma-bhūḥ/
kim adhikaraṇam kīdṛk kasya vyavasthitir ity asāv
udaram aviśad draṣṭum tasmai jagan-nidhaye namaḥ// 1.2.

When the cosmos comes to an end,
the self-born Creator, the artist who fashions it anew
from his perch on the flower growing in God's navel,
moment by moment slips down its stalk into God's belly
to see what goes where, what to fix in place, and how.
To that god, reservoir of reality, we bow in worship.[24]

Probably we would do better to translate "*whenever* the cosmos comes to an end," taking the Imperfect *aviśad* as iterative: this process happens repeatedly. Brahmā, the artisan (*śilpin*), has to consult the blueprint for creation; and since the cosmos has been swallowed up by Viṣṇu at the end of the *mahākalpa*, the only place he can check is in the god's own internal domain, uniquely accessible to Brahmā via the stalk of the lotus on which he usually sits

22. 1.13 in the edition of Betavolu Rāmabrahmam.

23. Cf. 7.84, a strong variation on this same image, discussed in section F; 1.6, 1.12; 7.151.

24. There is an ambiguity in *puraḥ*: Viṣṇubhaṭṭa glosses *ādau*, "(the creator) at the beginning." Rāmacandra Miśra, following Rucipati, reads *trilokī-nagaryāḥ śilpī*, "the creator of the palace that is the cosmos."

(*nābhi-pathaika-niketanaḥ*). Note the anxiety of the craftsman who has to get everything right, exactly according to plan.[25] The artist-creator is a professional, not simply inspired but highly conscious, self-critical, and experienced. He is also apparently driven by the kind of questions that fill up the entire third *pāda*: What goes where, how to do it, what comes first? Such questions are no doubt intended to amuse us when we apply them to Brahmā, the world-creator; but they may well comprise, on another level, an account of the poet's own creative process. As we saw, "polishing," "crafting," "finishing" are integral to his self-image, even if the actual materials at his disposal come from some "reservoir of reality," *jagan-nidhi*, which precedes and is never exhausted by the artist's reworking.

Since this verse is an opening invocation, the commentator naturally sees a reference to the plot of the play that is about to begin—in particular, to Hanumān's slipping into Laṅkā to see Sītā (and Durgā, the city goddess).[26] In any case, the to-and-fro movement inwards and outwards does seem relevant to the business of composing poetry. Stylistically and syntactically, the profusion of shifters draws attention, including, in particular, the dangling relative pronoun *yasya* in *pāda* ***b***; only in the last words of the verse is the syntactic tension resolved by the correlative *tasmai*. This is classic Murāri style. In a sense, the verse revolves around this floating, detached pronoun, the one fixed point in Brahmā's continuous movement up and down the lotus. Very often Murāri builds a verse around just such a precarious, often seemingly minor, initially opaque point of syntactic reference—a small open space inside a dense and confusing hypotaxis. The result is a tremendous potential dynamism; the sentence facilitates and somehow contains a strong kinesis, with concomitant tension, as we see in the transition from *viramati* at the outset—the end of time—to *pratikṣaṇam* halfway through, a minute-by-minute progression or repetition that produces a sense of movement through or into the present (consistent with the iterative understanding of the verb). Again and again, such a complex sequence collapses into what we might call a "holistic present,"

25. Compare 2.19: The ascetics performing the *agnihotra* in Viśvāmitra's ashram are so emaciated that they look like the lines penciled in by an artist who will later proceed to fill them in with colors:

tapaḥ-kṛśatarair aṅgaiḥ sraṣṭum ākāritair iva/
sāyaṃ prātar amī puṇyam agnihotraṃ prayuñjate//

Rucipati:

citra-likhanâdau prathamaṃ rekhā kriyate tato varṇikābhiḥ pūryata iti dhvaniḥ.

Note *sraṣṭum*—the verb of creation.

26. Thus Viṣṇubhaṭṭa. Does *tribhuvana-puraḥ* evoke Puri?

sometimes explicitly thematized as such.[27] The present moment, in a typical Murāri poem, is a flash of movement—often in more than one direction[28]—and rapid shifts. Metrical and syntactic means are enlisted in order to make such effects possible; inevitably, Pollock-style "dissonance" between these two domains becomes regular, almost the norm, as in our verse.[29] We can note in passing that this verse, in *hariṇī* meter, follows the opening *śārdūla-vikrīḍitam*, a cadence that this poet sometimes favors.[30]

I will come back to some of these more technical features, which do tell us something important about Murāri's poetic praxis and its possible meanings; in particular, I want to focus more carefully on the nature of the kinetic sequences that we find so often in the *AR* and their syntactic correlates. Precisely here, in the powerful syntactic embodiment of multi-directional movement, may lie the secret of Murāri's *gambhīratā*. For the moment, still on the level of overt imagery, let us examine a verse that nicely complements the invocation we have just studied. Here is 7:80: moonrise somewhere over the southern tip of India; Rāma, in the Puṣpaka-vimāna, is said first to study the new (crescent) moon and Sītā's face, then to sing the verse.

ārabdhe dayitā-mukha-pratisame[31] *nir-mātum asminn api*
vyaktaṃ janma-samāna-kāla-militām aṃśu-cchaṭāṃ varṣati/
ātma-drohiṇi rohiṇī-parivṛḍhe paryaṅka-paṅke-ruhaḥ
saṅkocād ati-duḥsthitasya na vidhes tac chilpam un-mīlitam//

When Brahmā began to fashion the moon
in the image of my lover's face,
at the very instant of its birth it shot
a spurt of white light that hit the lotus
where Brahmā was sitting and made it close
its petals, so the Creator, in a tight spot, furious
at the object that had betrayed him, never finished
his work of art.

27. Thus in 2:34 Viśvāmitra is said to have condensed all of past time and future into the present moment; and cf. 2.39, where this sage articulates the future course of events, which he knows as a single continuum (rather like Vālmīki in the *Rāmāyaṇa* frame).

28. See D. Segal on Mandelstam's '*raznonapravlennost*', multi-directionality in phrase or line: Segal 1998, 11; and section E.

29. Look at **mahā-/kalpe nābhi-/ pathaika-niketanas*, twice breaking the compound artificially, and, more striking still, **tasmai/ jagan-nidhaye* in ***d***, dividing the main sentence. For further examples of *yati*-dissonance in Murāri, see Pollock, to which we can easily add instances.

30. For example, 2.68–69, and so on. On 1.1 see section E.

31. **pratibhaṭe* in Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa's text.

This may be the place to mention that Murāri shows a distinct interest in unfinished or imperfect artistry, especially verbal and poetic.[32] In a sense, this idea is the natural corollary of the primary notion of the poet as craftsman: a work may, as we all know, not live up to its conception. Again, such a notion is rather different from that of the poet as purely inspired by Sarasvatī; interference or static in the reception of a divine impetus can explain other sorts of poetic failure, not the difficulties of the artisan who is having trouble with his medium, his own abilities, or, as in the present verse, his work-place.[33]

Apart from the reappearance of Brahmā as a somewhat bumbling *śilpin* in this verse, we should notice how, again, Murāri takes a poetic convention—the "fact" that the moon's rays cause the lotus to fold its petals—and extends it beyond its usual limits, to comic effect. In essence, we have here a variation on the figure *vyatireka*, the *upameya* surpassing the *upamāna*—or better still, this is the sub-type *pratīpa*, implying a certain scorn for the lame and wholly inadequate *upamāna*. Sītā's face is, as we know, like the moon; indeed, in this case Sītā's face was the actual prototype for the moon that Brahmā had before him, or in his mind, when he set to work (much as in the previous example: he needs a blueprint). But since the crescent moon is so slight and dim in comparison with the face, Rāma (or Murāri) offers a logical explanation of what has happened: no sooner was the first segment of the moon in place than its rays did what they always do to the lotus; and the result was that the great artist, squirming uncomfortably on his seat, could simply not finish the job properly. Reconstructing the ideational sequence, we could say that the reversed simile (the simple, first-level *vyatireka*) is filled out by a specious, though technically very logical, deduction on the level of pure poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*). But on reflection, the logical process is actually self-parodic (the implicit *irrealis* conditionals would go something like this: if Brahmā's seat had not folded up under him, and if he had put his mind to it, he would eventually have produced a moon that would have been a pretty close imitation of your face).[34] The parody, delightful in itself, reframes the initial figure, so we end up with a complex, process-oriented, second-order mode of figuration (which has no name). It would not, perhaps, be stretching matters too far to speak of a corresponding second-order syntax, which carries this process to its conclusion. The verse

32. Thus 1.56: The Nāginīs singing Daśaratha's praises are particularly charming because the sounds (*varṇa*) they utter are indistinct (*viṣama*)—the consequence of their having forked tongues. Cf. 1.32 and 2.36 (on the *viśvāmitra-sṛṣṭi*). Both Daśaratha and Rāma stumble and stutter under intense emotional pressure: see 5.22.

33. See the verse attributed to Pĕddana on the external conditions necessary for making good poetry: Heifetz and Narayana Rao 1987, 153.

34. Rāmacandra Miśra states this thought definitively.

opens with what appear to be two locative-absolute clauses, one elliptical, the other embedded in the first but marking a second stage in the sequence. 1) While [Brahmā] was beginning to create, 2) he/it—Candra—poured out a mass of moonlight.... The locatives in ***c*** then show us the locus of Brahmā's unfinished *śilpa*. Even so, the verse does not read entirely smoothly; the long string of locatives is no doubt deliberately confusing, and the full force of the infinitive, *nirmātum*, is somewhat blunted by the ellipsis. Some sentences, like some *objets d'art*, remain rough-hewn.

Still, what matters is the progression—a causal sequence compressed into the confines of these four lines, proceeding via the reframing of an inherited figure and its logical extension to the point of parody. Gary Tubb has named somewhat similar verses in the Pāla poets "chain-reaction" poems, one element leading sequentially into another and then yet another; we will examine several more examples from the *AR* in section E. What is, perhaps, most striking in the Murāri verse just cited, like in so many of this poet's statements, is the transition from the "primary" or "primitive" level of inherited figure, idea, or convention to a wider, playful, and more reflective level that reintegrates the poetic material in a new, more dynamic, pattern. The Murāri poem typically moves through a set of steps or stages, turns back to examine itself or explain itself, and then moves on to closure from an unexpected, wide-angle vantage point. A text filled with such verses is itself in constant movement, continuously re-contextualizing and reimagining its primary images and themes.

"Internal reframing," to give a name to one major component of this technique, suggests a new relation to the inherited matter of the poem. Look, then, at the way Murāri speaks of his model, Vālmīki, in the metapoetic prologue to the *AR*:

> *tam ṛṣiṃ manuṣya-loka-praveśa-viśrāma-śākhinaṃ vācām/*
> *sura-lokād avatāra-prāntara-kheda-cchidaṃ vande//* 1.10
>
> I salute that visionary sage,
> that tree that offers rest
> to words travelling downward
> from heaven to the human world
> on a lonely, painful path.

Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa explains: *loke prayāṇa-śrāntā hi pura-nikaṭa-vṛkṣādi-cchāyāsu viśramyaiva puraṃ praviśantîti tat-samādhiḥ*, "Exhausted travellers often rest in the shade of trees, and so on, on the edge of the city before they enter it." Such is the role of the first poet, who shelters Murāri as he has guided many divine words in their descent through the empty space between heaven and earth. Without Vālmīki, a poet, however gifted, has no support, no place to rest; he

suffers from *kheda*. The poet works in a space defined as *prāntara—dūra-śūnyo 'dhvā*,[35] a distant and empty road—and his words are, it seems, in danger of falling free, of becoming exhausted or getting lost.[36] They need a ladder or, more specifically, a very tall tree. The rather odd, even bizarre image of weary words desperately picking their way down through the branches of a tree, who is the first poet, takes us back to Brahmā as he slides down the lotus-stalk into Viṣṇu's belly. Once again, this is no ordinary *rūpaka* but rather a figurative superimposition unusual enough to make us wonder if the poet really means it. It calls attention to itself in an almost strident manner.[37] On second or third reading, we may come to like it. Murāri has rested in the shade of the Vālmīki prototype, though only for a moment on his way into the fully human domain where he will, no doubt, do his own, original work.

That work depends on what I have called "transfiguration." Given or inherited raw materials have to be transformed—cooked, ripened, mixed together, chiseled, polished, shaped, inspected, refined—if they are to become poetry. A good poet has a mind like an oyster that takes in drops of water or ambrosia from the *śāstra*s and turns them into pearls in the forms of sounds (*akṣara*); when his mind spits out these sonic pearls, the poet strings them together along the chain (*guṇa*) that is his hero's virtues (*guṇa*); the finished necklaces bounce and jingle around the necks of connoisseurs (1.5).[38] So Murāri announces at the outset; and he concludes his work with the confident hope that his poetic talent or quality (*guṇa*), fully awake, has indeed achieved a kind of alchemy:

devasyâtma-bhuvaḥ kamaṇḍalu-jala-srotāṃsi mandākinī-
gaṅgā-bhogavatī-mayāni punate yāvat tri-lokīm imām/
tāvad vīra-yaśo-rasâyana-madhu-syandaḥ kavīnām ayam
jāgartu śruti-śaṣkulī-valayita-vyomâvagāhī guṇaḥ// 7.152

As long as water pouring out from Brahmā's pot
as the Ganges in the sky above, in our world, and underneath it
will go on nourishing the triple cosmos,
may this special quality that belongs to poets
work its alchemy of honey from a hero's fame
deep in the space inside your ears.

35. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa, citing *Amarakoṣa*.

36. Thus Rāmacandra Miśra.

37. *Vācām*, linked to both of the long *samāsas*, produces *kākâkṣi-gola-nyāya*, as Rucipati notes (see also Steiner 1997, 85).

38. *cetaḥ-śuktikayā nipīya śataśaḥ śāstrâmṛtāni kramād*
vāntair akṣara-mūrtibhiḥ sukavinā muktāphalair gumphitāḥ/
unmīlat-kamanīya-nāyaka-guṇa-grāmopasaṃvalgana-
prauḍhâhaṅkṛtayo luṭhanti suhṛdāṃ kaṇṭheṣu hāra-srajaḥ//

Another slightly bizarre, incongruous, synesthetic image eludes simple classification. Whatever it is, it has the property of transmuting *yaśas* into *madhu*—a little sticky, perhaps, in one's ears. No less important is the emphasis on space and, once again, depth. The *guṇa* praised in this verse seems also to have an intellectual aspect that is integral to the alchemical process. The manuscripts put these words in Rāma's mouth, but they are clearly the poet's own parting benediction and a condensed restatement of his method and goal.

D. Moon-struck Rāma

To get a feel for Murāri's unusual technique, we need to look beyond the individual stanza at a longer, continuous segment. We can see that he produces intricate *kāvya* verses, but do they add up to anything resembling a play? Is the *AR* an integrated text that can be studied as a whole? I believe it is, but not as a *nāṭaka*; it is, rather, a non-standard form of *mahākāvya*.[39] In fact, we see in Murāri the final *kāvya*-ization of Sanskrit drama, both in terms of style and in the range of subjects the text explores, which are surprisingly close to Daṇḍin's famous list of *sarga-bandha* themes. Thus we have a profusion of sunrises, sunsets, seasons, battle-scenes, love-verses, travelogues, dharma discourses, political consultations, and so on. It is, moreover, difficult to imagine a work of this complexity being performed as a play, unless it were in the drawn-out diglossic mode that we see in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, for example. Murāri's verses require explication and repay close and repeated reading or hearing, in the *kāvya* manner. We can only guess who his audience was—he tells us in the prologue that the play was to be presented at the festival (*yātrā*) of Puruṣottama on the shores of the ocean, thus possibly in Puri[40]—but it was certainly sophisticated and highly trained in grammar and other *śāstras*.[41] In all likelihood, we are dealing with a text meant for oral, sung recitation, not for acting on stage.[42]

I feel that all attempts to uncover in the *AR* traces of the *sandhy-aṅgas* and *sandhy-antaras*, and of other structural features of *nāṭaka* according to the normative theory, are futile, *pace* the medieval commentators and some of their modern successors.[43] The text does not lend itself to these divisions. It is

39. Here there is, in my view, a divide between Bhavabhūti, whose plays *require* staging if one is to experience their true effect, and Murāri.

40. This setting may have become a topos: see *Navasahasāṅkacarita* (thanks to Phyllis Granoff). See discussion in the concluding section F).

41. Some verses play on Pāṇini's *sūtras* and technical terminology and are thus intelligible only to someone versed in this tradition: 2.86; prose following 4.11 (*sthānivad-bhāva*); 3.6; 7.39.

42. See Steiner 1997, 34–35.

43. See Warder and Harinarayana Bhat.

organized along quite different principles, as we can see at virtually any point. Only the division into seven acts does have its integrity (rather like *sarga*-units in a *mahākāvya*). Each act functions very well as a dramatic sequence that articulates a coherent, relatively self-contained course of development. In the early acts, in particular, there is always a very slow, sometimes excruciating progression toward a brief moment of brilliant action, which takes place offstage and is followed by a short coda. It is at least possible that this regular structure reflects an implicit theory of action—its generative causes, internal movement, culmination, aftermath, potential meaning, and psychological repercussions.

Here are the seven acts in narrative guise:

1. Following the prologue, Viśvāmitra arrives at Daśaratha's court and asks that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa come with him to the forest.
2. In Viśvāmitra's ashram, Rāma kills Tāṭakā (the sun rises and sets, and the moon appears).
3. Rāma breaks Śiva's bow in Janaka's court and wins Sītā.
4. Rāma defeats Paraśurāma after a long verbal duel. A false letter arrives in Mithilā from Kaikeyī demanding that Bharata be crowned king and Rāma exiled to the forest.
5. Following fast-forward reporting of the meeting with Guha, crossing of the Ganges, arrival in Pañcavaṭī, and Rāvaṇa's successful kidnapping of Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa wander into the monkeys' kingdom; Vālin is killed, Sugrīva crowned.
6. Rāma kills Rāvaṇa.
7. The aerial tour of India in the *Puṣpaka-vimāna* returns the heroes to Ayodhyā.

There is clearly no attempt to recapitulate the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* story; many of the lacunae are covered in particularly inventive, and rather lengthy, *viṣkambhaka* interludes that precede Acts 2 to 6. As this schematic outline might indicate, Act 5 has a pivotal position in the overall narrative structure. However, the great dramatic events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* receive, on the whole, rather slight attention, at least in terms of the textual space they take up (thus Rāma's banishment, for example, happens in the blink of an eye, almost as an afterthought at the end of Act 4). The poet's main focus is elsewhere. His departures from Vālmīki's narrative have been discussed at length by Lévi, Steiner, and Warder; we will concentrate instead on matters of poetic method and intent.

Let us turn, then, to the second half of Act 2, undoubtedly one of the artistic highlights of this text. In particular, I want to look at parts of Rāma's long soliloquy on the moon that follows his slaying of Tāṭakā. We can set the stage with a striking verse on nightfall, before Tāṭakā appears. Rāma and

Lakṣmaṇa have been present, at mid-day, at the end of one of Viśvāmitra's ritual performances—this after they have spent most of this day enjoying the wilderness landscapes and the changing of the light, described in highly inventive detail. Now, as the sun sets, Lakṣmaṇa says:

cūḍā-ratnaiḥ sphuradbhir viṣa-dhara-vivarāṇy ujjvalāny ujjvalāni
prekṣyante cakravākī-manasi niviśate sūrya-kāntāt kṛśānuḥ/
kiṃ câmī śalyayantas timiram ubhayato nirbharâhas-tamisrā-
saṅghaṭṭotpiṣṭa-sandhyā-kaṇa-nikara-parispardhino bhānti dīpāḥ// 2.51

Gleaming jewels on serpents' hoods
light up every crack and hole.
Fire sinks from the sun-stones
into the *cakravākī*'s heart
as the lamps are lit, piercing the darkness
piece by piece, like splinters of twilight
split and scattered, on either side,
when day smashed against night.

Thickening darkness is lit by many glowing points of light—some issuing from the anthills and crevices where serpents live, some apparently from the clay lamps in the ashram or perhaps in forest homes outside it.[44] Note the progression: first one observes the light radiating from the serpents' hoods; then, as the sun finally disappears, the sun-stones cool, transferring their burden of fire into the burning distress of the *cakravākī*s, separated each night from their lovers (thus naturalistic observation shifts into a more emotional mode); finally the last streaks of red and orange fade from the sky, and the lamps are lit. But above all it is the final, extended *utprekṣā*-image that focuses the poem: beginning with the denominative participle *śalyayantas*[45] in ***c***, we find ourselves in a moment of fierce conflict, a clash of day and night on the frontline of twilight, which is bruised, scraped, and shattered (*saṅghaṭṭa*), then ground into powder (*utpiṣṭa*) and scattered through the sky. Most of this happens in the single *samāsa* spilling over from ***c*** into ***d***, *nirbharâhas-tamisrā-saṅghaṭṭotpiṣṭta-sandhyā-kaṇa-nikara-parispardhino*, which takes us through the series of battlefield events ending with the victory of night. We should listen to the harsh alliteration building up in this compound, which also rides roughshod over the *yati*-breaks (*pāda*-end, *sandhyā-/kaṇa, pari/-spardhino*) and fills the entire semantic space with a kind of mounting fury. Nightfall in the forest is no innocent affair.

44. Steiner 1997, 129, suggests that *dīpāḥ* refers to the stars or, alternatively, to fireflies and glow-worms.

45. v.l., *śalkayantaḥ*.

An image like this—utterly fresh, innovative, linguistically powerful, and precise, rich in "tone" or "mood," and fully worked through in its context—confirms the notion that Murāri went his own way. We find ourselves at what is, for all intents and purposes, a systemic limit. Murāri concludes the series of Pāla poets by stretching their particular forms of stylistic expressivity, and above all their grandeur of vision and language, about as far as they can go. He also, as we have already seen, tends to look back and reflect upon the forms he uses, sometimes pushing them to the edge of parody. It is perhaps easiest to observe this pattern in the domain of figuration, but Murāri's syntax serves his poetic purpose and is likewise stretched past earlier constraints. In the present verse, as often, we are close to an intensified, rhythmically patterned prose—two short, self-contained sentences followed by a final grand one, with typically delayed subject, proleptic participle, and the *samāsa* functioning like an extended clause or, perhaps, two interlinked clauses.[46] We have come a long ways from Kālidāsa-type *Sperrung*, but there are clear echoes of Bāṇa's heightened descriptive prose.

Now that the clash of day and night is over, it is Rāma's turn to tell us what he sees:

viśvaṃ cākṣuṣam astam asti hi tamaḥ-kaivalyam aupādhika-
prācyâdi-vyavahāra-bīja-virahād diṅ-mātram eva sthitam/
gṛhyante bhaya-hetavaḥ paṭubhir apy akṣântarair bhāti ca
dhvāntenâtighanena vastu vacasā jñātaḥ svareṇâmukaḥ// 2.52

The domain of the eye has gone under.
Ultimate darkness is what is.
In the absence of the seed of ordinary perception,
falsely projecting "east" or "west,"
only pure space remains. Anything impinging
on the other senses—not the eye—is cause
for fear. In darkness so dense, you recognize
a thing only by word, and you know who is who
only by sound.

Rāma, a precocious teenager, is something of a philosopher, with strong Advaita leanings. He knows the feeling of undifferentiated space. Unlike a true Advaitin, however, he feels under these conditions mostly an ominous, oppressive fear. As to the self-knowledge that truly open space might enable, there is little room for it in the forest at night; whatever residual cognitive capacities survive the onslaught of darkness depend entirely on sound, on a spoken name

46. We could also say that Murāri's style shows us the final dominance of a left-branching syntax: participle, adverb, and *samāsa*-string all modify the delayed subject, *dīpāḥ*.

or word. Something is about to happen, and its prelude is a short essay on space, naming, and the unstable limits of perception, Murāri's favorite theme. As if to show just how far he can take us in this direction, he gives Rāma another short verse mixing a startling *rūpaka*-series with *apahnuti*:

ghanatara-timira-ghuṇotkara-jagdhānām iva patanti kāṣṭhānām/
chidrair amībhir uḍubhiḥ kiraṇa-vyājena cūrṇāni// 2.53

A fine powder is falling through the chinks that we call stars,
chewed out of the wooden logs we call space
by the worms known as darkness.

The trope turns on two distinct meanings of *kāṣṭhā*—"wooden log" and "direction of space." So space is, among other things, a set of huge logs bored through by the worm of darkness. Starlight is the sawdust left over by the worms, and the holes themselves are the stars—an interesting example of an object that has become empty space. Perhaps the young Rāma is hallucinating. This verse, placed at a strategic moment of transition, is another fine example of Murāri's "expressionist" tendencies and another boundary-marker in the evolution of genre and style.

No sooner has Rāma finished reciting his grim image than Tāṭakā's arrival is announced (offstage). Viśvāmitra orders Rāma to destroy her, and Rāma, surprised, asks—"*Her*? A woman?" Cries of alarm filter in from the *nepathya*, but Rāma remains both hesitant and cool. Killing Tāṭakā will be no problem, but is it the right thing to do? Lakṣmaṇa loses patience: "Why is he still standing there thinking? (*mīmāṃsate kim āryo 'yam*). The *śāstra* adapts itself to the words of these sages (*vācam eṣāṃ ṛṣīṇāṃ hi śāstram evânuvartate*)."[47] But Rāma is still mulling things over in a rather original manner. Killing a woman, he says, may not lead to *adharma* if the order comes from one's guru; and anyway "we're only boys, here today and gone tomorrow; if we close our eyes, the shame will go away."[48] On the other hand, it is the guru himself who will be left feeling ashamed (2.60).

The shouts from behind the curtain are, however, intensifying. Rāma takes his bow and exits the stage. We hear the next report from Lakṣmaṇa: Tāṭakā has been swiftly dispatched, and the sages, who saw it all happen, in a flash, are transported by feelings of *karuṇā, āścarya, bībhatsa, hāsa, trāsa*, and *krodha* (2.64). The colorful emotional mix is interesting in its own right—there is *no* sense here of a dominant *rasa* with its subordinate components.

47. A direct reworking of Bhavabhūti: *ṛṣīṇāṃ punar ādyānāṃ vācam artho 'nudhāvati.* (*Uttararāmacarita* 1.10).

48. *adya sthitvā śvo gamiṣyadbir alpair lajjâsmābhir mīlitâkṣair jitaiva*, 2.59.

Indeed, the point should be stated more strongly, for the entire remainder of this act is taken up with a delicate exploration of the emotional consequences of this one brief burst of activity—although very little of the psychological reality is stated directly, and at no point would a *rasa*-based analysis be adequate to describe what is unfolding. We see it all, in all its complexity, through Rāma's eyes, and only by seeing those apparently external features of the nocturnal landscape that he chooses to describe.

His soliloquy begins with an overt statement: "This business of killing a woman does not delight me" (*straiṇo vadho māṃ na sukhā-karoti*, 2.67). He seems to have undergone a shock. He looks around him; the ashram has reverted to its usual, tranquil state. Smoke is curling up from the altars; the *brahmacāri*s have washed their birch garments and hung them up to dry, so as to be ready for tomorrow;[49] guests are fast asleep in the houses (68). Although everything is normal, this very peacefulness piques Rama's curiosity (*kautuka*). It is as if he were saying to himself, "I have just killed someone, and the world is outwardly unchanged."

He looks upward, at the rising moon:

sphurati purato mādyan-mādyac-cakora-vilocana-
prakara-kiraṇa-śreṇī-datta-svahasta-ghanam mahaḥ/
hṛdaya laghu mā bhūḥ preyo-darśana-pratibhūr ayam
kuvalaya-dṛśām indur netre sudhābhir anakti naḥ// 2.69

Light thickens before me, fed by the eyes
of moon-mad *cakora*s. Don't worry,
my heart. This moon, anointing
our eyes with nectar, guarantees
that girls with eyes dark as nympheas
will see their lovers.

A *non sequitur*? The verse has exercised the commentators considerably. Just what is Rāma trying to say—and why is he saying it at this point? One could, I suppose, give up looking for a link and say that Murāri simply throws in lyrical verses at any opportunity, without worrying about the setting, the speaker's state of mind, or the cumulative experience of the listeners. Modern western readers readily take this route. I am sure, however, that we can do better. To my ear, Rāma's post-traumatic soliloquy is meant to tell us everything the poet knows or imagines about the hero's awareness as it struggles with his sudden, rather unwilling leap from childhood to a premature maturity. His eyes are wide

49. Rāma is not so disturbed that he cannot produce another remarkable phrase: *sañcīva-riṣyamāṇa-baṭuka-vyādhauta-śuṣyat-tvacaḥ...tapodhana-gṛhāḥ* (68).

open: indeed, the verse could be said to be "all eyes"—Rāma's, those of the love-lorn women, and those of the *cakoras* who feed on moonbeams and radiate an eye-borne, luminous satisfaction. This is a poem about seeing. Recall that just a few minutes before Rāma had described the darkness as having overwhelmed and rendered useless the "domain of the eye."

On the simplest level, Rāma paints a reassuring picture. Distant lovers, tormented by the moon, will surely hurry home. The moon is surety for a speedy reunion.[50] Still, Rāma's tongue seems to falter a little. For one thing, there is a severe *yati* slippage in *pāda* ***c***, as Pollock has noticed: *hṛdaya laghu mā/ bhūḥ preyo-dar-/ śana-pratibhūr ayam*, breaking the verbal root-derivative (*darśana*) in two.[51] We also have a colloquialism, *sva-hasta-ghanam*, in *pāda* ***b***: the light from the *cakoras*' eyes is "lending a hand" to the moon (Rucipati: *sva-hasto 'valambas tena ghanam nirantaram*). Notice, too, the final word of the verse, *naḥ*—"*our*" (my) eyes are soothed by the moonlight. They must be in need of soothing. As Rucipati says, in the name of anonymous "others": *bhagavato hi cetasy andhakāre sati mahad duḥkham utpannam*, "given this darkness, a great sorrow has arisen in the hero's mind." Hence the need for reassurance. "Soon this darkness will be driven away" (*ato 'ndhakārâpanodaḥ saṃnihita iti bhāvaḥ*).

It is also possible, some argue, that the whole verse is bitterly ironic, a product of severe mental distress—as one might say to Kaikeyī, "Look! Your wishes have been fulfilled!" (Rucipati again). Or maybe the light on the horizon is yet another demon approaching, or some new demonic trick—but no, Rāma calms himself, it is only the beneficent moon. And if you think that such doubts are inappropriate to Rāma who, being god, knows all past and future events, then you are wrong; sometimes he just doesn't know.[52]

In short, we have excellent reason to read this verse as very pointed in effect, a true reflection of Rāma's inner state. Even if we put aside the poignant theological note—although there are other moments in the *AR* when Rāma's awareness of himself as "only" human or as more than human is very much at stake, as in most other *Rāmāyaṇa* texts—we actually hear him speaking to his troubled heart. But this is only the beginning.

indur yady udayâdri-mūrdhni na bhavaty adyâpi tan ma sma bhūn
nāsīre 'pi tamaḥ-samuccayam amūr unmūlayanti tviṣaḥ/
apy akṣṇor mudam udgiranti kumudair āmodayante diśaḥ
sampraty ūrdhvam asau tu lāñchanam abhivyaṅktuṃ prakāśiṣyate// 2.71

50. Rucipati: *candrodayasya virahiṇāṃ kandarpa-jvara-dāha-dāyitvāc candram ālokya svayam eva kusuma-bāṇa-vaśa-gaḥ priyaḥ samāgamiṣyatîti hṛdayâśvāsanam iti bhāvaḥ.*

51. Pollock 1977, 89.

52. See Rucipati, elaborated by Rāmacandra Miśra.

If the Moon has not yet climbed
the Moonrise Hill, so be it!
The rays of light sent as his vanguard are already
uprooting all that is dark, bringing joy
to our eyes, filling space with the fragrance
of nympheas unfolding. Soon he, too,
will shine on high—only to show us
his dark sign.

Rama recites this verse *sanirvedam*—despondent. He begins with a strong verbal echo of the previous verse I have cited: *tan mā sma bhūt*, like *laghu mā bhūḥ*. Here we have stumbled on a law that regulates this entire long passage and many others like it. Alliterative and verbal repetition from verse to verse, on a large scale, binds the text together.[53] Usually assonance on this scale operates in pairs of adjacent verses. The phenomenon is so striking it cannot be ascribed to chance; we would do better to think in terms of musical notes or "themes" articulated by repeating phonetic sequences. In this sense, a passage like Rāma's soliloquy can be heard, semantically, rhythmically, and in tonal-phonetic terms, as something like the slow self-revelation of a *rāga* through its fixed *mūrchanā* notes; regular aural repetitions impart a sense of great internal coherence while allowing scope for continuous development and thematic shifts. Since spelling out these phonetic patterns is somewhat tedious—although they are transparent to anyone who recites the text aloud—I will keep this discussion focused on the level of verbal meaning, figuration, and syntax; but we can make no greater error than to forget the sheer musicality of these verses, the true ground of their expressive force.

That Rāma is sad is clear, but observe the metaphor he chooses, a military one. As we know from experience, the commander is usually the last to arrive on the battlefield. He always sends his foot-soldiers ahead to engage the enemy, extirpate him, and tidy up the area. The first moonbeams are very successfully accomplishing this mission. When the great general himself will arrive, he will have only to hoist his banner. In the present case, however, the moon's insignia or mark (*lāñchana*) is, as the commentators remind us, the dark stain (*kalaṅka*) often identified as a hare or a deer—hardly a source of pride. The suggestion, then, is that this flawed moon is really rather pitiable.[54] Rāma, too, must have reason to think that he has acted—violently—only to create or to reveal a stain.

53. Thus *ca/cha* dominate 73–74; *ud-grathnatībhiḥ* in 73 leads to *mathnanti* in 74; the interplay of palatals and dentals in 75 is resumed (mirrored, in reverse order) in 76; a profusion of velars and labials colors 78–79, and so on.

54. Rāmacandra Miśra: *svayaṃ tu kalaṅka-mātram prakāśyata ity aho śocyatā śaśina iti dhvaniḥ.*

Slowly this heaviness lifts. Three lucid verses show us Rāma as spellbound by the moonrise which—continuing the military register—quickly drives darkness from the dry ground, traps it in mountain caves, and here and there even captures a few survivors alive in the form of shadows (2.74). He is, for a moment, happy (the stage direction confirms this). Then, suddenly, doubt returns in the form of another pair of unsettling *utprekṣās*:

kiṃ nu dhvānta-payodhir eṣa kataka-kṣodair ivendoḥ karair
atyaccho 'yam adhaś ca paṅkam akhilaṃ chāyâpadeśād abhūt/
kiṃ vā tat-kara-kartarībhir abhito nistakṣaṇād ujjvalaṃ
vyomaivedam itas tataś ca patitāś chāyā-cchalena tvacaḥ// 2.75

Has the ocean that is night been purified by moon-beams
that clean like *kataka*-powder, and the shadows we can see
are the mud that sank to the bottom?
Or perhaps these moon-beams are sharp axes
that have stripped away the bark—these same shadows,
littered here and there—and exposed the bright inner heart
of the sky?

This is the *alaṅkāra* called *sandeha*: an imagined (*kavi-pratibhottāpita*) comparison based on *āropa*, superimposition, is couched as a doubtful hypothesis or series of conjectures. If the conjectures are not resolved within the verse, the *sandeha* is, according to Ruyyaka, *śuddha*[55]—as in the present case. Rāma's initial idea is that the moon's rays have cleaned the turbid ocean of darkness just as crushed *kataka*-seeds "rubbed upon the inside of water-jars precipitate the earthy particles in the water."[56] Since Rāma sees a bright, moon-drenched sky but the earth dark with shadows, the latter must be the mud that has sunk to the bottom as a result of the *kataka* purification tablets. Another thought that crosses his mind is that the sky is actually a vast tree; the moon's rays have cut away its dark bark, which has fallen to earth in strips, that is, as shadows. What remains visible above is the tree's white or yellow inner layer.

We have already encountered one tree of cosmic dimensions (the poet Vālmīki, assisting lonely words on their arduous descent toward the earth, 1.10). This time visible space itself has become such a tree, as elsewhere it is a worm-eaten log (1.53, above), a vast wall (2.48), a crucible (2.81, see below), an undifferentiated mass of darkness (2.52), and various other things. Much depends on the context and vantage point of perception. As stated earlier, Murāri is interested in

55. Ruyyaka 17 (p. 36). Both conjectures in our verse include a component of *apahnuti*.

56. MW s.v. *Kataka* is Strychnos Potatorum, the "clearing nut plant," and we have here an instance of *jala-kataka-reṇu-nyāya* (see Steiner's detailed note, 136).

the transformation of space into a structured perceptual field; in our verse, this process is connected, again, to the verb (*nis-*) *takṣ*, that is, to cutting away, trimming (as in the case of Tvaṣṭṛ and the sun) and, more specifically this time, to peeling off the black outer layer in order to reveal the luminous inner reality. The special resonance of this verb is enhanced by the double appearance of *chāyā*, "shadow" (once in each of the conjectures). Chāyā, we should recall, is the ersatz, surrogate bride (evil stepmother to Yama) whom the sun ultimately rejects in the hope of regaining the love of Saṃjñā, his first wife; it is for her sake that he subjects himself to Tvaṣṭṛ's cutting and slicing. Perhaps in his case, too, inner being, in the form of burning Vedic speech, can be revealed or liberated only in this manner.

All of this figurative reimagination of the night-time sky requires a visionary effort on the part of the poet, who is following Rāma's own progress from the shock of total darkness through sudden eruption into lethal action and thence to moon-rise and the experience of a constantly intensifying white light. This experience has many sides to it, and the poet wants to explore them all, always in the projected, indirect mode of figure-based description of an external landscape. Subtle emotional configurations flit through this landscape. Darkness, whatever its origin and domain, is a bitter enemy to be destroyed—and when the sun can no longer accomplish this task (remaining alive only in the hearts of the *cakravākas*), the moon angrily takes over and kills the last dark survivors (2.77). Anger thus seems to be present in Rāma's uneasy mind. These same triumphant moonbeams also force open the compacted *kumuda* buds (2.87). The world is exploding with light, but black holes remain:

taruṇa-tamāla-komala-malīmasam etad ayam
kalayati candramāḥ kila kalaṅkam iti bruvate/
tad anṛtam eva nirdaya-vidhun-tuda-danta-pada-
vraṇa-vivaropadarśitam idaṃ hi vibhāti nabhaḥ// (2.79)

Soft and black as a young *tamāla* tree
is that dark stain on the moon—
or so everyone says.
But it's a lie.
What we are seeing is the sky
showing through the hole left by Rāhu's teeth
when he took a savage bite.

The *apahnuti* continues the set of vivid and caustic images; "denial" of a standard perception in favor of another, figurative one goes well with the perspectivism implied by the series of deictic shifters (*etad, ayam, tad, idam*; and note the three evidentials, *kila, eva, hi*). Rāma is reporting an internal conversation

marked by these slight but expressive signs of varying distance and emphasis; the stain (*etad...kalaṅkam*) is very close to him, the moon itself a little farther away (*ayam...candramāḥ*), as is the sky visible through the hole (*idam...nabhaḥ*).[57] The affinity he was feeling earlier with the black mark or stain (*lāñchana*, 2.71) has apparently not diminished in force. This is the moment when the mythic memory of Tvaṣṭṛ and his lathe returns in full force, still in the context of contemplating the darker aspect of the moon:

> The sky is dotted with rays that are like atoms of light
> that the grinding-stone showers, and the stars
> are somewhat larger, spark-like chunks.
> It seems the Blacksmith has just finished
> polishing and paring away the sun, and the moon,
> dark by nature, is next in line. (2.80)[58]

We have reached the end of Rāma's soliloquy—a powerful ending, built around the allusion to a Vedic story, that brings closure to a thematically integrated essay on moon-rise as tracing a rich mental map. Taken as a whole, the passage could be a meditation or visualization progressing through several stages, each intensifying and reworking the parameters of its predecessor, extending the primary images and figures in the interests of stretching and shaping our perceptions. Not surprisingly, Rāma's voice works upon the other figures present in this scene and elicits their response. First Lakṣmaṇa sings two striking verses that are close to Rāma's in tone and imagery:

> *bhūyastarāṇi yad amūni tamasvinīṣu*
> *jyautsnīṣu ca praviralāni tataḥ pratīmaḥ/*
> *sandhyânalena bhṛśam ambara-mūṣikāyām*
> *āvartitair uḍubhir eva bhṛto 'yam induḥ//* 2.81
>
> Why are there so many stars on dark nights
> and so few on moon-lit nights?
> If we think about it, it becomes clear.
> Melted down by the fire of twilight
> in the crucible of the sky, the stars are poured
> into the moon.

We are back in the world of alchemy: space itself has become a laboratory replete with burners and a "mouse"-like crucible (*mūṣikā*) for the liquefaction

57. I thank Tom Hunter for discussions of shifters and, in particular, for the suggestion of an implicit perspectivism.

58. See text and discussion in section B in this essay.

of starlight (*āvartitaiḥ* = *dravī-bhūtaiḥ*, Rucipati; *piṇḍī-kṛtaiḥ*, Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa). Although the *utprekṣā* continues the effort to reimagine or restructure space in rather startling, not to say outlandish, ways, the syntax is, for once, straightforward, even colloquial (note delayed subject of *bhūyastarāṇi* and *praviralāni*, that is, *uḍubhiḥ* < **uḍūni*). But perhaps the most salient feature of this slight verse is the explicit resort to pseudo-logical inference or deduction: *pratīmaḥ*, signaling the *utprekṣā*. We have already seen Murāri's penchant for this device, used to elaborate a novel image by logically extending or toying with a given convention, story, or natural "fact."

As if to deepen the play, Lakṣmaṇa now reflects further and concludes, with a smile, that the cosmos is after all behaving quite normally, in accordance with *dharma* ([*vihasya ca*]: *hanta, yathādharmam etat*):

yat pīyūṣa-mayūkha-mālini tamaḥ-stomâvalīḍhāyuṣāṃ
netrāṇām apamṛtyu-hāriṇi puraḥ sūryoḍha evâtithau/
ambhojāni parāñci tan nijam agham dattveva tebhyas tato
gaurâṅgī-vadanopamā-sukṛtam ādatte patir yajvanām// 2.82

The moon of life-giving rays comes eastward as a guest at sunset
to save our eyes, flickering from an overdose of darkness,
from untimely death. Still, the lotus blossoms
turn away, so he transfers his own black sins
to them and takes from them their great merit
of calling to mind a girl's
bright face.

The *dharma* texts tell us that a guest who is turned away empty-handed at sunset takes with him any merit stored up in the niggard's house and leaves behind any demerits of his own.[59] In the present case, this scenario is even more dramatic, because the guest has arrived on a healing mission; only he can save what is left of the world's vision from finally flickering out. Recall Rāma's Verse 2.52 (*viśvaṃ cākṣuṣam astam*) on the field of vision that is extinguished as darkness falls. Now the lotus closes at sunset, and this can only be because, in its stinginess, it has turned away from the unwelcome guest and has as a consequence been burdened with his black karmic residues; on the other hand, the good karma of the lotus, that is, its similarity to a beautiful woman's face, is now transferred automatically to the rejected guest—and that is why the moon also resembles a woman's face. At last we know.

59. Rucipati and Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa both cite *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* 26.33 (cf. *Mahābhārata* 12.184.12): *atithir yasya bhagnâśo gṛhāt pratinivartate/ sa tasya duṣkṛtaṃ dattvā puṇyam ādāya gacchati*. This karmic law of exchange operates with particular force when the guest arrives at sunset. See notes by Harinarayana Bhat, 2:205.

This poem is a fine example of Murāri's expanded narrative verses; a complex sequence of actions, causally motivated and inter-dependent, is compressed into four musical lines. We also see his preference for second-order figuration (figures folded back onto other figures, as in *alaṅkāra-dhvani*) and rapid inferential chains. Thus the standard simile

(i) The face is like a lotus
is first inverted:
(ii) The lotus is like a face
and then shifted to its other conventional vehicle:
(iii) The face is like the moon
although this relation is likewise inverted:
(iv) The moon is like a face.
More to the point, the verse implicitly ties together two well-worn *upamāna*s, which usually keep their distance, through a purely logical deduction:
(v) [Therefore] the moon is like a lotus

(in as much as a woman's face is like both). This kind of metaphoric cross-identification is rather rare; and notice that the standard *upameya* only turns up toward the end as a secondary move, not as an active player in the verse. Beginning with yet another figurative strand that puts in question the operation of visual perception, in the eery presence of untimely death (*apamṛtyu*), the poem proceeds to concoct a tableau based on a sophistical, almost farcical extension of poetic conventions, which are then rationalized and explained by this same playful parody of logical argument. All this is meant to make us smile, as the stage-direction says.

For all that, we cannot ignore the emotional context or the accelerating climax Murāri has so carefully engineered. Perhaps the danger—the loss of vision—is real, like the burden of dark *agha* weighing on Rāma. Perhaps the moon is not the only unwelcome stranger.

As if to bear out these somewhat heretical notions, Viśvāmitra suddenly speaks up, in an almost cynical tone:

ahaha nāmadheya-mātra-mādhuryād a-paramârtha-dṛśvāno vipralabhyante/

"Alas, people who cannot see the truth are deceived by a sweetness that exists in name alone."

He, too, is smiling as he looks around (*sarvato 'valokya sasmitam*):

smerā disaḥ kumudam udbhiduram[60] *pibanti*
jyotsnā-karambham udaraṃ-bharayaś cakorāḥ/

60. See Pāṇini 3.2.162, *vidi-bhidi-chideḥ kurac*, and note Murāri's delight in rare lexical usages.

āḥ kīdṛg atri-muni-locana-dūṣikāyāṃ
pīyūṣa-dīdhitir iti prathito 'nurāgaḥ// 2.83

Space is luminous in and of itself.
The nymphea unfolds of its own accord.
The *cakora*s feed on moonlight-gruel just to fill their bellies.
Strange, isn't it, how attached people feel to the moon,
born from the specks of dirt in Atri's eye,
and take as simple truth its name, "Delicious-Rays."

Viśvāmitra has privileged access to hidden levels of reality; he knows what is supposed to happen in the future, and works to achieve it; he knows Rāma is god. But when it comes to the transfigurative processes embodied in the boy's lyrical speech, the sage is impatient, hard-headed, skeptical.[61] Given the intense inflation of perception in the previous verses, Viśvāmitra's deflation is almost literally breathtaking. We could also regard it as the stark culmination of the drive to reflect upon, parody, and reframe the *kavi-samaya*s; a process internal to the verses achieves external formulation. It is not the moonlight that opens up the *kumuda*. Space conforms to its own natural law; it doesn't wait for or need the moon. There is nothing so very special about the *cakora*s' diet of moonlight, which is no more than coarse gruel, *karambha*, for them. These poor birds have no idea that they have wandered into a world of charmed lyrical conventions. Poets, or for that matter the metaphoric levels of everyday speech, are deceptive. The moon itself is no more than a ball of dust that Atri extracted from his eye. Here the poetic name, *pīyūṣa-dīdhiti*—"having rays of ambrosia"—directly picks up Lakṣmaṇa's opening phrase in Verse 82, immediately preceding this one; it also takes us back immediately to the opening of Rāma's speech in 2.69 ("this moon, anointing our eyes with nectar"), so that the passage as a whole attains closure in a way that, again, lays down a certain limit to the play of genre and style. After this verse, there is really nowhere to go.

It has been a long day for Rāma. The intricate promise of sunrise (Tvaṣṭṛ polishes the sun) ends in a somewhat sorrowful moonrise and a radical, skeptical conclusion. Rāma, as Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa says, is out of sorts.[62] A single dubious but consequential action, at the onset of night, has changed his reality, and he

61. Steiner 1997, 139, thinks of him as "anti-romantic."

62. He is slow in approaching Viśvāmitra, and the latter complains about this in the prose passage immediately following the verse. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭta says: *śīghram an-ājigamiṣā-dyotako 'yaṃ candra-varṇanā-prapañco dhīrodāttatā-vyañjaka-mahāsattvatā-nimittakaṃ strī-vadha-jaṃ vailakṣyaṃ dyotayati*, "this long description of the moon, which indicates why he [Rāma] was not eager to return quickly [to Viśvāmitra], indicates his bad mood resulting from his having killed a woman, as occasioned by his inner greatness that reveals his noble nature."

(or rather, Murāri) tells us about this in the long string of verses we have examined. Re-reading the passage, one can hardly fail to see its profound coherence. There is nothing random about the choice of images or about the syntactic, aural, and metrical means chosen to express them. By now we should also be able to recognize Murāri's characteristic voice and the major elements of his technique.

E. A Kinematic Spectrum and the Murāri Twist

I will try to spell out these components with the help of a few more verses that bear close scrutiny. Most of the features of Murāri's craft have cropped up in the course of our discussion, but a simple typology would focus on the kinds of movement internal to the verse, the central instrumentality of space and depth. Thus we have poems of linear sequence, often highly complex, passing through several stages; bilateral or multi-directional poems; causal narratives, sometimes in reversed or unexpected order (including "chain-reaction" and "feed-back" poems); and reframing or reflexive, frequently parodic or comical examples, which start from some premise and proceed to extend, examine, unravel, or otherwise comment upon it. These patterns are in no way mutually exclusive, and all of them tend to develop in the direction of what I call the "Murāri twist."

1. To observe the unrolling of a single complex sequence, look at 7.104. The *Puṣpaka-vimāna* is flying past the Śaiva shrine(s) of Saptagodāvara—presumably Dakṣārāma in the Godāvarī delta. Rāma folds his hands in prayer to Śiva:

 nṛtyârambha-paritrasad-giri-sutā-riktârdha-saṃpūrtaye
 nirvyūḍha-bhrami-vibhramāya jagatām īśāya tubhyaṃ namaḥ/
 yaś cūḍā-bhujageśvara-prabhṛtibhis tādṛg-bhramantīr diśaḥ
 paśyadbhir bhrama-ghūrṇamāna-nayanaiḥ śānto 'pi na śraddadhe//

 When you started to dance, the Mountain's daughter
 was so terrified that she abandoned her half of your body,
 and in the hope this hole would be filled
 you've stopped spinning, lord of all the worlds,
 though the snakes and other beings held
 on your head, their eyes still whirling
 with revolving space, don't believe
 you've come to rest.

 Even before we begin to find our way through the sequence, we notice the stunning iconicity of the poem, with its dizzying movement; like the snakes, we seem to be caught up in rapid spin, and it is hard to

know if, by the end, the movement has accelerated to some ultimate point or has somehow stopped. Indeed, an empirical observation familiar to all of us underlies the poet's description: the world goes on spinning in our mind, in our actual sensory perception, even after we have stopped turning round.[63] I find it remarkable that Murāri has found a way not merely to articulate this fact precisely but also to recreate the experience itself, with tangible immediacy, in the course of our listening to the poem.

In the midst of this high-velocity exercise, a defined, familiar theme turns up (at the end of *pāda* ***a***)—that of filling up an empty space. Now look closely at *pāda* ***a***, a single *samāsa* which sets out a series of discrete events: Śiva begins to dance; Pārvatī is suddenly afraid; as a result, she rushes out of her side (the left half) of their shared body. All this happens within the confines of the *samāsa*, which thus effectively compresses the equivalent of three separate clausal segments into one dense string; and the string is still not complete. The three sequential elements produce a wish and a concrete result: Śiva, feeling the terrible vacuum left in his very being by Pārvatī's departure, wants to fill himself anew, no doubt by winning her back; so he stops the dance (in the *samāsa* that opens *pāda* ***b***). Arrested movement allows space for identification and even a pause for ritual salute (the second half of *pāda* ***b***). By now we are halfway through the poem (the empty half?) There is room to breathe at the *pāda* break. Rather a lot has happened, but the more far-reaching statement still lies ahead. A relative clause occupies *pāda*s ***c*** and ***d***, beginning with the relative pronoun and ending in the passive finite verb. The logical subject of the clause—the snakes and others—attracts the listener's attention and, perhaps, identification. Whirling space (*bhramantīr diśaḥ*) is the embedded object of the participle *paśyadbhiḥ*, and the manner of the snakes' seeing is graphically described (*ghūrṇamāna-nayanaiḥ*): circles within circles. At the same time, dramatic developments are taking place. *Tādṛg*, the deictic shifter in ***c***,[64] stands out clearly in its position directly after the *yati*-break, and precisely this space is taken up by *śāntaḥ* in ***d***; in both cases, we have a change in state metrically and syntactically marked. What is most striking, however, is the way *śāntaḥ*, which really ought to bring about a certain release

63. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa comments in this vein: *nṛttād uparato 'pi prāg-bhramaṇa-saṃskāra-bhraman-nayanair vāsukyādibhiḥ samāpita-nṛtta iti na niracāyīti bhāvaḥ*/

64. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa glosses, *anupamam*. I am tempted, however, to isolate it as a proleptic modifier for *śāntaḥ*.

of tension,[65] is immediately undermined by *na śraddadhe*—the onlooker's skeptical stance. The dance is over, the god now calm—or is he? Is total movement distinct from the arrest of movement? We have, in a sense, retraced the long progression we saw in Act 2, ending in Viśvāmitra's deflating comment, but this time it all transpires within a single compacted stanza.

This sudden, final switch in perspective, as the poem strives for closure, is the "twist" so characteristic of Murāri. You think you have reached the end of what is usually a highly involved, causally driven sequence viewed simultaneously from several perspectives (here: Śiva's, Pārvatī's, and the snakes'), and then the poet surprises you by turning things around one more time.[66] Such a technique puts a heavy burden on the last few words or syllables of a verse. Often it is this concluding element that is highlighted by the earlier, seemingly "floating" or dangling shifters.

2. Take another example, which belongs to the second category, of bilateral or multi-directional poems. Let us examine the opening, benedictory verse of the *AR*, which in many ways sets up a paradigm for what is to come:

niṣpratyūham upâsmahe bhagavataḥ kaumodakī-lakṣmaṇaḥ
koka-prīti-cakora-pāraṇa-paṭu-jyotiṣmatī locane /
yābhyām ardha-vibodha-mugdha-madhura-śrīr ardha-nidrāyito
nābhi-palvala-puṇḍarīka-mukulaḥ kambos sapatnī-kṛtaḥ // 1.1.

May he free us of obstacles,
this god with the Kaumodakī club,
whose two luminous eyes we worship.
One [the sun] brings joy to the *cakravāka* bird.
The other [the moon] feeds the *cakora.*
Half unfolding with gentle sweetness
while the other half folds in sleep,
the red lotus rising from his sunken navel
could be a conch.

One long hypotactic sentence in Sanskrit has turned into four in my English; but the hypotaxis is hardly incidental. We might think of it as winding a spring in anticipation of the final twist that will release it.

65. As in Ingalls' interpretation of the famous *kṣipto hastâvalagnaḥ* verse (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 49).

66. Isaac Babel, "Guy de Maupassant": "A phrase is born into the world at once good and bad. The secret lies in a barely perceptible twist. You have to hold the lever in your hand while it warms up. You can turn it only once, not twice." Murāri turns the lever twice.

As usual in Murāri, *kavi-samaya*s are periphrastically present as objects of second-order, playful figuration. Sunrise reunites the separated *cakravāka* birds. Moonlight nourishes the *cakora*. Sunlight opens the red lotus; moonlight closes it. Since Viṣṇu's "gifted" or "skillful" (*paṭu*) eyes are the sun and the moon, the lotus growing out of his navel, in clear sight of both eyes, has every right to be a little confused (*mugdha*, in the middle of the long *samāsa* in ***c***, may hint at this).[67] In any case, the first thing we see when the syntax clarifies in our mind is this contrary, double movement of opening and closing, which must be going on continuously.[68] To capture this dynamic bi-directionality in one powerful *pāda* (***c***) would perhaps be enough of an accomplishment, but Murāri intensifies or twists the image to another, tertiary level. This particular lotus, half-open (half-closed), simultaneously folding and unfolding, approximates or "rivals" (*sapatnī-kṛtaḥ*) the whorled, twisting conch. It is not merely the visual similarity of the half-opened bud and the conch-shell that strikes us; even more pressing is the sense of ongoing, revolving, three-dimensional movement (perhaps again, as in the previous verse, a continuous movement that is also frozen and timeless). The final two words carry out this additional semantic effort, which makes all the difference. And if the lotus is like a conch, rotating on its axis because of two conflicting vectors that act upon it without pause, so might the poem be seen as moving ceaselessly between closure and disclosure, encoding and revealing. That is its power. Murāri begins his long work with a first, implicit, meta-poetic thrust.[69]

I would like to offer, without comment, one last example of Murāri's marked tendency toward multi-directionality, as in Mandelstam. At the opening of Act 6, Mālyavān, Rāvaṇa's aged and despairing minister, is consulting with two younger *rākṣasa*s, Sāraṇa and Śuka, about the dire political situation in Laṅkā. The news that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are closing in, after successfully completing the bridge, has already reached them; Mālyavān wants to know what Rāvaṇa is doing to get ready. Śuka reports:

sakhe kiṃ tasya vidhānam?
śrutvā dāśarathī suvela-kaṭake sâṭopam ardhe dhanuṣ-

67. Thus Steiner 1997, 80.

68. It can also be strung out in consecutive sequence: see 7.45.

69. Among other formal features of this verse, we might note the Dravidian-style head-rhyme in ***c*** and ***d*** (*yā**bhyā**m/ nā**bhi***) and the contrast between the single compressed *samāsa* in ***b*** (with its bilateral *dvandva* opening) and the two complementary adjectival *samāsas* in ***c***. Separating the two vectors allows the movement articulated in ***d***.

ṭaṅkāraiḥ paripūrayanti kakubhaḥ proñchanti kaukṣeyakān/
abhyasyanti tathaiva citra-phalake laṅkā-pates tat punar
vaidehī-kuca-pattra-valli-racanā-cāturyam ardhe karāḥ// 6.17

What do you think he's doing?
Since he heard that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
are on the slopes of Suvela Mountain,
ten of Rāvaṇa's twenty arms have been sharpening his swords
and proudly filling space with the twanging of his bow,
but the other ten are still practising on canvas
the art of painting fine designs
on Sītā's breasts.

3. Often the kinematic sequences unrolling in a Murāri verse are heavy with causality, sometimes with proliferating causes that overdetermine the result. In some cases such causal processes are syntactically incongruous, as in the following description of the young Sītā's blossoming femininity (stated as a general observation about women of her age):

tadātva-pronmīlan-mradima-ramaṇīyāt kaṭhinatāṃ
nicitya pratyaṅgād iva taruṇa-bhāvena ghaṭitau /
stanau saṃbibhrāṇāḥ kṣana-vinaya-vaiyātya-masṛṇa-
smaronmeṣāḥ keṣām upari na rasānāṃ yuvatayaḥ // 3.7

As if gathering all that was hard
from each limb of the body,
every enchanting, delicate part unfolding
at that moment, fresh youth has fashioned
their two firm breasts. Is there anything more delicious
than such young girls, tenderly opening up
to love, shy one minute, wild the next?

The rhetorical question is literally: *keṣām upari na rasānāṃ yuvatayaḥ*, "which *rasa*s do they not surpass?"—perhaps another meta-poetic touch.[70] The poem is a single long sentence with the embedded *utprekṣā* taking up the whole first half; and here, too, the second *pāda* embeds the first, thus giving a clear concentric pattern to the whole. The idea is clear enough—the breasts have drained the rest of the body of anything hard or firm, hence the delicate softness of all the other limbs and parts—but what is striking is the reversed order of events: syntactically, the limbs are soft before their residual harshness has been taken away.

70. See 5.22, on *rasa* and *bhāva*. Such allusions to dramatic theory in Murāri have been studied by Judit Törzsök.

Once we have reached this point and absorbed the meaning of the figure, we are faced (in *pāda* ***c***, spilling over into ***d***) with another *samāsa* rich with alternating, contrasting movement. The tentative awakening of desire is *masṛṇa*, "tender," "soft," "slow," "unsteady," "smooth"[71]—echoing *mradiman* in the opening *samāsa*—in its moment-by-moment shifts from one mode to the other. There is an element of precise, realistic observation; the poet is describing something he has actually noticed in adolescent girls, "shy one minute, wild the next." But it is the sense of alternation in state (hard to soft, mischievous to subdued) that provides the verse with both theme and structure; notice that *kṣana-vinaya-vaiyātya* recapitulates the reversed sequence of *pāda* ***a*** (the adolescent Sītā—still playing with her dolls, *pāñcālikā*, according to 3.5 and the prose that precedes it—is first *viyātā* and only later *vinītā*). Thus the effect pre-exists, or lies latent in, the cause. Syntax, here somewhat at odds with semantics, asserts this understanding of process. It also shows us the relative autonomy of the poet, who is perfectly capable of activating in his poem, which exists as an independent, self-contained linguistic entity, his own version of causal sequence.

Even when the causal series is more or less linear and familiar, we often find that it includes strange feed-back loops that influence ongoing processual operations, as in the following words of polite flattery offered by Viśvāmitra to Daśaratha in Act 1:

dattendrâbhaya-vibhramâdbhuta-bhujā-saṃbhāra-gambhīrayā
tvad-vṛttyā śithilī-kṛtas tribhuvana-trāṇāya nārāyaṇaḥ /
antas-toṣa-tuṣāra-saurabha-maya-śvāsânilâpūraṇa-
prāṇottuṅga-bhujaṅga-talpam adhunā bhadreṇa nidrāyate // 1.27

Your amazing arms keep Indra safe as if they were
playing a game. Indeed, so profoundly reassuring
is your whole manner that Nārāyaṇa has relaxed
when it comes to protecting the world
and is sleeping soundly these days, utterly
content at heart, since the great serpent
(who feeds off the wind) fills up fully with His cool
and fragrant breath and thus becomes
the perfect mattress.

I have to confess that Murāri's densely staggered compound, covering most of *pādas* ***c*** and ***d***, has totally defeated my English. There are

71. Rucipati: *masṛṇo mando madhuro vā*. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa: *mṛduḥ asthira iti yāvat*.

things that English simply cannot say. The point, of course, is that Ādiśeṣa is continually breathing in Viṣṇu's own out-breaths, and that the latter have become extraordinarily cool, fragrant, and presumably regular as a result of the god's inner satisfaction (*antas-toṣa*) at being able to relax his usual state of nervous tension (since he has to save the cosmos from whatever threatens it at any given moment, definitely a high-stress job). Daśaratha has taken over this burden very effectively, so the quality of air coming from the god—which provides the snake with his only nourishment—has improved immensely, thus allowing Ādiśeṣa to inflate to the fullest degree, thus ensuring the god a superbly effective air mattress.... We can assume that the more Viṣṇu relaxes, the deeper he sleeps, and the better the air he breathes out, which inflates the snake still further, and so on: the process that begins with Daśaratha's proven effectiveness in protecting Indra (which is almost forgotten by the time we reach the middle of the verse) has become a mutually reinforcing cycle of interlinked causes. The accordion-like effect of the long *samāsa*, at once compacting and unfolding a rather intricate series of sequential actions, allows for this vivid, multi-layered, aero-dynamic illustration of cosmic process. The poem almost seems to inflate together with Ādiśeṣa; a remarkable space has opened up, with room in it for many concurrent or consecutive elements; and this spaciousness derives in part from the lighthearted, playful or comic "internal reframing" of inherited cultural information (Viṣṇu sleeps on Ādiśeṣa; snakes feed off the wind).

4. Such internal reframing, often ending with the Murāri twist, constitutes by far the largest category of kinematic verses in the *AR*. The basic mechanism, as we know, exists much earlier—there are many examples in Bhāravi, Māgha, and the Pāla poets. Nonetheless, Murāri seems to have regularized and systematized these patterns. He is the witty, reflective poet par excellence, almost unable to limit himself to straightforward, lyrical description, however complex. He nearly always finds a way to expose the conventional properties of his inherited poetic language in a light, semi-parodic manner even while he is busy extending, or transfiguring, conventional perception in far-reaching, serious, and highly original ways. None of this could happen in the absence of the internal movement shaping the poem's structure, usually achieved through the work of his strangely elastic *samāsa*s. Sometimes, however, a series of somewhat smaller segments produces a substantial narrative with this same reflective, comic texture. Here is Rāvaṇa's minister, Śauṣkala, sent to Janaka's court in

order to win Sītā for his master, whose virtues Śauṣkala describes in a suitably *rākṣasa*-like recollection:

saṃtuṣṭe tisṛṇāṃ purām api ripau kaṇḍūla-dor-maṇḍalī-
krīḍā-kṛtta-punaḥ-prarūḍha-śiraso vīrasya lipsor varam /
yācñā-dainya-parāñci yasya kalahāyante mithas tvam vṛṇu
tvam vṛnv ity abhito mukhāni sa daśagrīvaḥ kathaṃ varṇyatām // 3.41

When Śiva, the enemy of the Triple City, was fully pleased
by Daśagrīva's devotion—since this great hero had put
his restless arms to work playfully cutting off his own
many heads (which then grew back) and was now itching
for a boon—all these heads, somewhat ashamed
to utter the request, started quarreling
with one another: "*You* ask him!"
"No, *you* ask!" But who could describe
such a person?

One wonders if this is the most attractive and convincing fact about a prospective bridegroom. By this point we should be accustomed to the orderly unrolling of sequence in the *samāsa* bridging *pādas* ***a*** and ***b***: first Rāvaṇa's arms were "itching" for action, then he cut off his own heads, then these heads grew back. When all this exciting activity was over, he became eager (*līpsu*) for the boon he thought he had earned; and Śiva was surely pleased by all this (again the order is syntactically jumbled—the verse begins with a statement of Śiva's satisfaction and then proceeds to explain its cause). The interesting complication lies in the emerging conflict between Rāvaṇa's ten heads, beautifully encapsulated by the enjambment between *pādas* ***c*** and ***d*** (repeating the quotation). Having come this far, we remember that we are in the midst of a relative clause, still waiting for the correlative (very much as in Verse 1.2, discussed earlier); so the poem constitutes a single, well-integrated, action-packed sentence.[72] Murāri, let me say again, is an expressionist realist; he thinks seriously about how a *rākṣasa* might speak—what images he would use, how his syntax would sound, and so on. The repetition inside the *iti*-clause, clearly the climax of the whole poem and, in a sense, its true "point," is another fine instance of Murāri's intensifying twist.

Such powerful and inventive conclusions to complex, process-oriented stanzas are regular in Murāri. They sometimes begin with a strong instance of reframing, extending, or meditating upon a piece of inherited

72. Murāri shares with Rājaśekhara an absorbing interest in the motif of Rāvaṇa's self-decapitation: see *Bālarāmāyaṇa* 2.31 (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1546).

knowledge or wisdom and its pseudo-logical consequences, and then suddenly take off in a philosophical direction, perhaps ending in a reflective *arthântara-nyāsa* or some similar gnomic device. Here are two final examples, both characteristic of the poet's consistent effort to create a new, three-dimensional spaciousness within the confines of a single short verse. First, we hear Rāma pointing to Mount Mandara (apparently in the far north of India) from the *Puṣpaka-vimāna*:

tat tādṛk paṇi-rāja-rajju-kaṣaṇaṃ samrūḍha-pakṣa-cchidā-
ghātârun-tudam[73] *apy aho katham ayam manthâcalaḥ soḍhavān/*
etenaiva durātmanā jala-nidher utthāpya pāpām imām
lakṣmīm īśvara-durgata-vyavahṛti-vyastam jagan nirmitam// 7.41

Here he stands—the mountain that churned the ocean—
but I wonder how he was able to bear it
when the scars that had formed where Indra once cut off
his wings
were re-opened by excruciating friction
with the snake tied to him as a rope.
And since he's the one, damn him, who drew wicked Lakṣmī
out of the ocean at that time, it's all his fault
that our world has been torn asunder
by words like "rich" and "poor."

The serpent Vāsuki was tied around Mount Mandara, with the gods and the demons pulling in turn at either end, to effect the churning of the ocean of milk. Like all other mountains (with the exception of Maināka),[74] Mandara's original wings had been clipped off by Indra, leaving, it appears, thick scars. The chafing of the churning-rope/serpent has re-exposed the wound. Up to this point we have Murāri's typical wry musing about some mythic scene, with an involved sequence of events contained in the long *samāsa* bridging *pādas* ***a*** and ***b***. What we now recognize as a formula, the opening conjunction of shifters, *tat tādṛk*, expressly announces the reflective reframing that is about to take place. The second half of the stanza builds an implicit causal connection, with philosophical implications, on the basis of the initial poetic vision.

73. See Pāṇini 6.3.67.

74. Or perhaps a few more: Murāri imagines that when Agastya drank up the ocean, all the mountains that had hidden there together with Maināka in order to save their wings tried to fly again, but the wings, being water-logged after centuries in the water, functioned very poorly after take-off—so the mountains fell back into the crabs' holes at the bottom of the now empty sea. (7.89). The stanza beautifully imitates the mountains' choppy, desperate attempt to stay aloft.

Perhaps Mandara was so traumatized by this re-opening of his wounds that he deliberately produced the goddess Lakṣmī from out of the depths of the sea, with dreadful consequences for all of us. Lakṣmī stands impudently at the start of *pāda* ***d***—a situation of great emphasis and poetic tension; the verse has been aiming at presenting her to us all along. She is *pāpā*, "wicked," since along with her notorious fickleness and inconstancy she is responsible, by her very nature, for dividing people into *īśvara*, rich, and *durgata*, poor or unfortunate. Before she appeared, the world was relatively homogeneous (Rucipati: *lakṣmyā anutpattau jagad eka-prakṛti syāt/ na tu ko 'pi durgataḥ ko 'pîśvara iti*). Moreover, to some extent this disastrous division, however true to our experience, is a product of language (*vyavahṛti*, in both linguistic and pragmatic senses).[75] Re-traumatization leaves its marks, or takes its revenge, in our very speech.

Finally, let us look at a discursive *arthântara-nyāsa* from a point a little further along in the aerial tour of the subcontinent. You will recall that Brahmā was unable to complete his artistic work on the moon because at the first touch of moonlight his seat collapsed under him (7.80, discussed in section C). As a result, Rāma has informed Sītā, the moon is a mere crescent (and no true rival to her face). But Sītā is not quite content with this flattering trope. She thinks there may even be some special advantage in being less than full: "Those who are full of excellent qualities shine wherever they may be, but the slight or slender (*kṣīṇa*) climb to the top—as the example of the moon on Śiva's crest must prove." This *nidarśana*, as she calls it, inspires Rāma to search for an even more dramatic example. He fully agrees with Sītā (*evam etat*), and his response calls up, once more, the explicit theme of depth (*gambhīriman*) with which Murāri's play began:

setûpakrama-saṃbhramâhṛta-giri-prakṣepa-vegocchalan-
niḥśeṣâmbu-parisphuṭodara-darī-gambhīrimā sāgaraḥ/
cakre goṣpadavad vilaṅghitavato 'py antar-bhayaṃ māruteḥ
pūrṇatvād ati-ricyate hi mahatas tucchhasya durlaṅghyatā// 7.84

The cavernous depths of the ocean were clearly exposed
when we brought many mountains and threw them into it
while building the Bridge, and all the water splashed
high into heaven, so even Hanumān, who had jumped
over the sea as if it were only a puddle in the footprint
of a cow, was seized by inner fear.

75. See comments by Rāmacandra Miśra.

It is much harder to traverse a vast emptiness
than whatever is utterly full.[76]

F. Conclusion

(i) There is a coincidence of theme and method intimated by the verse just cited. Murāri's poetic technique is used to open up a spacious depth—first of all, and consistently, on the level of the individual poem. The single stanza has volume, elasticity, and sustained intensity, and it offers space to move. We have seen several primary mechanisms that generate this quality. Most Murāri poems are processual, in the widest and most basic sense. Several things happen in sequence, or in manifold interlacing sequences, or all at once. Multi-directional movement of this type is possibly Murāri's most useful discovery. Often there are contrapuntal, concurrent processes at work, as in a string quartet. A subtle perspectivism, allowing for the convergence of discrete voices or vantage points, stretches space still further. Technically speaking, such effects are repeatedly achieved by the accordion-like functioning of long *samāsa*s, at once expanding and condensing a set of actions, and by the conspicuous, seemingly asyndetic, clearly marked positioning of subtle shifters, "making the propositional reference dependent on the suitable indexing of the speech situation."[77] A simpler way to put this would be to note the slightly jarring effect of saying repeatedly, at moments of juncture or transition, "over here," "over there," "from this (or that) angle," "such and such," "that (somewhat distant or exotic) fellow," "this one, extremely close (too close)," and so on. All human speech includes such elements, but they assume an almost eery presence in Murāri's highly individual style.

Two specific patterns attract attention—the tendency toward internal reframing of a poetic convention or traditional item of knowledge, and the final twist that animates or intensifies an already complex, reframed statement. Both require considerable cognitive investment on the part of the listener. There is a logical, causal, and reflective aspect to many of the verses. We might think of Murāri as a rather intellectual poet, even perhaps a "poet's poet." His verses do not break off at the boundaries of language in the hope of propelling the listener over those boundaries into a trans-lingual, properly emotional or metaphysical domain, as *rasa*-theory might lead us to expect. Rather, Murāri uses language much as a sculptor uses stone. I will return to this point.

76. Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭa: "Thus in the world, a well (and the like) does not trouble us when we see it full, but we *are* disturbed if we see it empty," *prakṛte tu kūpâdikaṃ pūrṇaṃ ced dṛṣṭy-anudvejakaṃ bhavati tad eva riktaṃ cet udvejakaṃ bhavatîti lokoktiḥ* (note variant numbering: 79 in this edition).

77. Silverstein 1976, 24, on "referential indexes."

Part of the intellectual richness of this poetry is its delight in what I have called second-order, or even third-order, perspectives. Internal reframing naturally works this kind of magic. It is particularly noticeable in the area of figuration, but we have also seen examples that belong to syntax and to a somewhat wider range of pronounced meta-poetic features. In this connection, it is perhaps necessary to note that precisely because of this type of complex, reflective, second-order craftmanship, the texture of the work as a whole is actually rather "light," playful, ironic, and elegantly charming. It is a mystery to me that generations of western Sanskritists found Murāri turgid, heavy, and "flat."[78] Perhaps they never really read him.

What takes place vertically within the individual poem occurs in analogous ways on the level of larger, horizontal segments, as in the long soliloquy from Act 2 that we explored. Extended passages work through the same multi-directional, contrapuntal, perspectivist, and meta-poetic vectors that we see in verse after verse. At the same time, larger units, such as the Act (*aṅka*), do have their own slow rhythm and, as we have seen, an implicit theory of action. Very deliberate, lyrical tempos tend to build up to a brief, sudden burst of activity, whose consequences are then no less deliberately studied. Incongruous and dissonant notes have a place—sometimes the most salient place—within these expanded sequences.

Not all of this is, by any means, new. Second-order expansiveness, reflective, mirroring, or reframing, could even be said to be the central feature of Sanskrit *mahākāvya* generally, from the time of Bhāravi onwards. It is the far-reaching and systematic reconfiguration of these patterns that makes Murāri so interesting and that places him at a certain point in the history of the tradition. He seems to have realized this aspect of his originality, as he shows us in another implicitly meta-poetic verse, ostensibly about sunrise:

vikasita-saṅkucita-punar-vikasvareṣv ambujeṣu durlakṣyāḥ/
kalikāḥ kathayati nūtana-vikāsinīr madhu-lihām arghaḥ// 2.12

The bees, by close attention,[79]
reveal what no one else can see—
which of the unfolding lotus buds
are newly open
and which have already
opened once
and closed
and now open again.

78. Wilson, cited by Steiner, 1997, 9.

79. *arghaḥ* = *ādaraḥ* (Rucipati), but notice the pointed internal reference to the title of the play.

We hear a poet who pays attention to something truly *nūtana*, "new," hence rich with fresh honey, though it may look and sound very much like what has gone before.

(ii) The systemic aspect can be spelled out. With Murāri we reach the limit of the Pāla-poets' style. When a set of stylistic features is imitated by a voice that verges on parody, we can be sure that this set has more or less exhausted itself and will soon be superseded.[80] Many of Murāri's more surreal, even grotesque poetic moments can be understood in these terms. He is, I have argued, an expressionist, given to the transfiguration of our perceptual habits on the basis of a close, rather realistic observation. But it is just this expressionist tendency that constitutes the final stage in the Pāla poets' evolution from their point of origin in Bāṇa through Bhavabhūti to Abhinanda. Murāri inherited Bhavabhūti's innovations in plot, especially in the *Mahāvīracarita*, and even rationalized them to some extent.[81] He has, nonetheless, taken his materials far beyond their former *mise en scène*. Rājaśekhara starts at this point. A century or so later, Śrīharṣa will inaugurate a new stage by totally fragmenting and dissecting the poetic verse or line. Still further into the medieval period we find the traveling *cāṭu* poets who are magicians and *mantrika*s no less than astute literary critics—in both aspects extending Murāri's poetic bequest.

Note that parody is not satire. True parody always operates through the combination of two codes, one normative and re-affirmed, the second reflexive and subversive. The latter in no way destroys the integrity of the former, which it requires for its very operation. It is parody, not satire, that is capable of constituting a limit (as in the case of Cervantes).

(iii) One sure sign of the systemic change is the poet's own self-presentation as a *śilpin* craftsman, structuring space and filling it with objects, polishing, cutting, honing, and perfecting his work, which exists as a concrete, solid medium, though it consists of words. Here the affinity with Rājaśekhara is at its strongest. A famous passage in the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* describes the poet's very demanding work-day, which includes a set period (the fourth part of the day) for polishing and reworking what was composed in the morning (*pūrvâhna-bhāga-vihitasya kāvyasya parīkṣā*). "Since one's judgement is not incisive while composing under the influence of *rasa*, it is essential to re-examine [one's work]—to remove excess, fill in what is lacking, re-arrange what is not well ordered, and reconstruct

80. See discussion by Narayana Rao and Shulman of Vallabharāya's *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* in relation to the great Telugu poet Śrīnātha: 2002.

81. For example, in his reworking of the theme of the *Rāksaṣa* emissary who seeks Sītā's hand, and in his revision of the strange twist that makes a Yoginī the true voice of Mantharā. See discussion in Ramabrahmam, xiii–xiv.

whatever was forgotten."[82] None of this obviates those forms of inspiration, *pratibhā*, without which poetry cannot come into being; but even *pratibhā* requires practice (*abhyāsa*) in various technical ways spelled out in Rājasekhara's fourth chapter. Murāri inhabits this same world in which poetry is a profession, not unlike others, requiring self-discipline, technical training, constant application, self-criticism, and certain special forms of attention. Within this world, Murāri remains a brilliant maverick, responsible for fashioning a unique, idiosyncratic style.

(iv) Finally, we might, after all, be able to say something about context. The poet situates his work at the *yātrā* for Puruṣottama, as we have seen. Various circumstantial threads of evidence point in the direction of Puri. But even without a definite linkage to the Puri shrine of Puruṣottama-Jagannātha, there are certain key features of the text which, taken together, tell us something of its deeper axiology and its understanding of how poetry is meant to work.

One clear strand is "Vedic," in several specific senses of the word. Murāri foregrounds the arcane language of Vedic ritual[83] and is particularly fond of its textual correlates denoted by terms such as *akṣara, sūkta*, and *mantra*.[84] We began this essay with a verse in which Vedic *akṣara*s are shown to have far-reaching effects on reality; but the poem is perhaps speaking more directly about poets than about *ṛṣi*s (or rather: the poet *is* a new sort of *ṛṣi*).[85] Murāri aligns himself with Vālmīki, whom he calls both *muni* and *ṛṣi* (1.7, 1.10); by his own account, Murāri is Bāla-Vālmīki, his words as rich in immortal elixir as those of his model.[86] But such statements are only the more formal and external supports for an obviously deeper and more pervasive vision of the poet's identity and potentiality.

A poet is someone with access to the *vāg-brahman* or *śabda-brahman*, a luminous force, conducive to "weight," "depth," and "sweetness" insofar as it is applied to the various *guṇa*s of the Rāma story—a well-trodden path (*tat-tad-guṇa-garima-gaṃbhīra-madhura-sphurad-vāg-brahmāṇaḥ...kavayaḥ*, 1.9).[87]

82. *rasâveśataḥ kāvyaṃ viracayato na ca vivektrī dṛṣṭis tasmād anuparīkṣeta/*
adhikasya tyāgo nyūnasya pūraṇam anyathā-sthitasya parivarttanaṃ
prasmṛtasyânusaṃdhānaṃ ca/
Kāvyamīmāṃsā 10 (p. 52).

83. The tradition thinks of him as a Mīmāṃsaka, his "third path" lying between the Kumārila and Prabhākara schools: my thanks to H. V. Nagaraja Rao.

84. See Steiner 1997, 21: "Teilweise lässt sich auch eine Vorliebe für vedische Wörter beobachten, wodurch seine Sprache einen erhabenen, altertümlichen Anstrich erhält." For instances of Vedic terminology, see 3.33, 3.35, 3.55, 4.23, and so on.

85. Steiner 1997, 33.

86. Prose passage before 1.12.

87. The first half of this verse—the well-trodden path—is powerfully echoed in 5.26.

Vālmīki received this refulgent gift directly, without effort (*sva-nirbhāsa-śabda-brahmāṇam ācāryaṃ prācetasam* [*upaślokitavān*], prose following the above verse). Murāri, it seems, has to work at it, like the Vedic wordsmiths and ritualists who are also busy producing *śilpa*s, works of art—in some cases, "the visual transposition of a model consisting of sounds."[88] Murāri's profound engagement with the divinity of language lies at the heart of his book and follows the Vedic conceptual pattern. He, too, has composed a visual, three-dimensional, sound-driven model that required crafting (< *takṣ*) and polishing (< *un-mṛj*) and, no doubt, altered states of awareness. It is a path he has deliberately chosen, replete with transparent Vedic associations, and he has even provided himself with a mythic paradigm—that of Sūrya, Saṃjñā, and Chāyā (originally Saraṇyū and Savarṇā)—which, if we follow it through to the end, is also a story of return, via artistic means, to the hidden, original source (Saṃjñā/Saraṇyū, the sun's first wife).

But there is a still deeper sense in which Murāri is consciously and consistently "Vedic." Although he is ostensibly telling or retelling a story, very slowly, while continuously showing us images of himself at work, the great majority of his verses are lyrical, descriptive, and transfigurative in a manner reminiscent of Vedic poetry. The visionary, often surreal tone; incongruous juxtaposition of normally discrete registers or domains; mesmerizing aural quality; pronounced synesthesia; extreme extension of figuration, or the compounding of figures (again, from distinct domains); above all, the resort to a charged, mantic utterance—all this is Vedic. Murāri does not merely tell us that his *akṣara*s and *varṇa*s are like Vedic *mantra*s (although this theme, explicit in the prologue, recurs at several points); he constructs his poems so they sound and act like *mantra*s. His delight in esoteric diction and rare grammatical forms contributes to this impression, as does his unusual syntax, which regularly de-routinizes linguistic habit. In short, following the *AR*'s own self-definition in the prologue, we have before us a mantric *kāvya* composed by a self-professed *ṛṣi*-as-poet. The fact that the verses are, after all, intelligible should not obscure their power to astonish and bewitch.

But *śilpa*, in the Vedic sense, is not *art pour l'art*. It is meant to change the reality of the *śilpin* and of those who follow his work—by opening up a new space for living, by working upon the self (*ātma-saṃskṛti*), by enabling transition to another existential sphere, re-ordering the parameters of temporality, and so on.[89] Language is the medium in which such changes, all of which we have noted in Murāri, become feasible. Here we touch upon the least obvious but

88. Malamoud 2002, 21, citing *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 3.2.1.5. Malamoud goes on (22) to explain that "the Vedic poems and chants are themselves *śilpa*s, or the *śilpa* is the beauty in them."

89. Malamoud 2002, 23.

possibly one of the most important aspects of Murāri's poetry. For in the end he is operating in a milieu which is not Vedic but, most probably, proto-Tantric or yogic (in the context of medieval, Kaliṅga-style Tantric yoga). A *kavi*'s speech is effectual, like the *ṛṣi*'s; words are tangible, visible bursts of light, slivers shaved off the sun and harnessed to the poet's intention; the very name of Rāmabhadra magically protects whoever utters it from demonic forces, just as other mantric syllables become weapons;[90] in any case, real language—transfigurative poetic speech—is meant to uproot normative perception and thereby radically to transform the perceiver. At this point we might ask ourselves again about the identity of the audience for a work like the *AR*. If the temple setting is authentic, then questions relating to Rāma's own self-awareness (*ātma-veditā*)[91] or the effects upon him of hearing and seeing his own past and future actions—as happens at several points in the text—become significant. It is at least possible that Murāri was singing not only for learned connoisseurs but also for the god Puruṣottama, with the aim of operating on the forces active within him. Act 7, probably the most sustained expression of Murāri's art and the real high point of the drama (literally and figuratively), includes many *stotra*-like verses placed in the mouth of Vibhīṣaṇa, Vasiṣṭha, and others. Such verses prefigure the genre of liturgical poems for use in temple ritual. Earlier moments in the *AR*, such as Viśvāmitra's remarks when he first catches sight of Rāma in Act 1, or when he sees the two brothers again in Act 2 and speaks proleptically about their mission, seem designed to catch the god's attention—no less than ours—and to remind him of who he is.

One possible historical explanation for such a work would focus on the critical moment of transition in the Puri Puruṣottama cult from the level of a local deity with pronounced tribal features to a Brahminized, institutionalized Vaiṣṇava temple benefiting from strong royal patronage (including in its praxis the Tantric worship of Kamalā-Puruṣottama). At such a moment, a work like the *AR*, with a pronounced Vedic flavor but also with a link to the cultic realities of that time and place, could play a role of consequence. Precisely such a transition seems to have taken place in the mid-tenth century at Puri with the emergence of Puruṣottama in his classic medieval form.[92] Von Stietencron places the building of the first Puruṣottama/Nīlamādhava temple in Puri, after the "rediscovery" of the god by the Somavaṃśi king Yayāti I, between the years 949 to 959.[93] This date fits well with the lower end of the dating we ascribe to Murāri.

90. Thus Śunaḥśepa, prose after 2.8.

91. See 3, prose before 36 (Śauṣkala is certain that Rāma lacks this gift).

92. von Stietencron 1978. See also Steiner 1997, 15.

93. von Stietencron 1978, 66—69.

In any case, it seems we should recognize three Murāri personae, all in evidence in our play. There is, first, the sophisticated, witty, highly reflective Pāla poet—the last in the Pāla series. Then there is the polished *śilpin*, the poet as craftsman and scholar hard at work in the disciplined mode described so eloquently by Rājaśekhara. Finally, we have the Vedicizing proto-Tantric wordsmith, magically adept in the domain of mantic speech. The miracle lies in their fusion.

We have seen it in verse after verse, but a last, self-conscious example deserves attention. The penultimate stanza of the *AR*, supposedly sung by Rāma himself (god as a poet), combines overt Vedicisms, the metaphysical dependence on *śabda-brahman*, a defense against the *ālaṅkārikas*' critical stance, and a negatively articulated note of warning that sounds almost like a *mantra* of imprecation:

samunmīlat-sūkta-stabaka-makarandaiḥ śravaṇayor
aviśramyad-dhārā-savanam upacinvantu kavayaḥ/
na śabda-brahmottham parimalam an-āghrāya ca janaḥ
kavīnāṃ gaṃbhīre vacasi guṇa-doṣau racayatu// 7.151

May poets press a steady stream of nectar
stored in unfolding clusters of true speech,
and let no one who has not taken in
the fragrance that comes from godly sound
find fault or merit
in a poet's deep words.

The poem is a *savana*, literally a Soma-pressing sacrifice. Not everyone, apparently, can hear it (literally, smell it—more synesthesia). Those who *can* hear it, thus also judge it, will experience poetic speech in its primary aspect of depth.

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VI

Poets of the New Millennium

The year 1000 CE went unnoticed in South Asia, and our periodization of Sanskrit literature only accidentally corresponds to the arrival of a new millennium in Europe. It is nonetheless the case, as Sheldon Pollock has amply demonstrated, that accelerated processes of vernacularization can be seen throughout the Sanskrit cosmopolis, beginning roughly in the tenth century and extending for several centuries thereafter. By vernacularization Pollock refers to the crystallization of self-conscious literary and grammatical corpora within "languages of the place" such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and, later, Marathi, Hindi, and so on. Pollock has argued forcefully that this process comes at the expense of Sanskrit literary production and that the newly literary languages come to supplant the cosmopolitan idiom of Sanskrit at least as far as *belles lettres* are concerned.

The works discussed in the following two sections clearly demonstrate that a vital literary impulse continued to generate major works in Sanskrit, many of them of remarkable originality and undisputed novelty. The works of Bilhaṇa and Śrīharṣa discussed here still belong to the cosmopolitan order: they anticipate and, indeed, receive a universal readership. As Pollock himself has shown, Bilhaṇa embodies—in his autobiographical postscript to his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, where he narrates his wanderings from patron to patron from his native Kashmir all the way down to Kanyakumari—the vast geographical range that

Sanskrit culture still occupies. At the same time, the poet who travels through this space speaks in a radically new voice about himself and his sense of alienation from the cultural and intellectual worlds he inhabits, as Yigal Bronner's essay reveals. Śrīharṣa, as we have noted in the introduction to this volume, is seen by the Sanskrit tradition itself as the last of the great cosmopolitan poets, author of the fifth and final masterpiece in the canonical five *mahākāvya*s. We see this work as the culmination of the Kanauj heritage—the rich lineage that starts with Bāṇa and is the subject of the previous two sections—and indeed of the entire tradition of monumental narrative poems (Section 3).

And yet, Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīya* also represents a new departure. Even apart from the staggering complexity of the language and concepts that drive this poem, we find in it a series of unprecedented features. Never before in Sanskrit have the subtle complexities of character been so clearly foregrounded and worked through. We come to know Nala and Damayantī as unique individuals, almost in the novelistic sense. Indeed, at the dramatic highpoint of the poem—the ceremony of Damayantī selecting a husband—the poet brings the full range of his linguistic and artistic techniques to bear on the problem of defining Nala as an individual. This shadowy identity, the subject of Charles Malamoud's essay, comes to light in the multi-registered speech of an unusual character and perhaps the real heroine of the whole work, Poetry herself (as we have said in the introduction to this volume). Here is another conspicuous feature in the *Naiṣadhīya*, and, indeed, in other works of the period: a fascination with the process of composing and deciphering poetry. As we see in Phyllis Granoff's paper, Bilhaṇa also incorporates this reflexive mode in his play the *Karṇasundarī*. It is interesting that Tibetan poetry, which is produced in this period and is modeled after Sanskrit *kāvya*, also enshrines the goddess Sarasvatī, in praise poems such as the one discussed in detail by Dan Martin in this section. Let us note that Martin's paper demonstrates the cosmopolitan reach of Sanskrit literature as well as its outer limit: the Tibetan Sarasvatī has somewhat different concerns and interests from those of her cis-Himalayan sister.

The complexity that we have referred to is an important aspect of the working of these plays and poems and is in itself an almost inevitable product of any serious interaction with the cumulative richness of such a long tradition. Such complexity also has a beauty of its own. In addition to the aesthetic pleasure of decoding complicated, intertwining signals, the explicit reflexivity induces dizzying cognitive effects. We should also not ignore the fact that some of the works under discussion, and in particular the *Naiṣadhīya* with its embedded Tantric mantra and the Tibetan poems, have a profound religious program at their heart. In short, we might posit a new poetics of complexity—linguistic, intertextual, figurative, and conceptual—as one primary feature of the major *mahākāvya* works of this period.

17

The Poetics of Ambivalence

Imagining and Unimagining the Political in Bilhaṇa's Vikramāṅkadevacarita

Yigal Bronner

A. Introduction: The Place of a Poet

Compared with the scant knowledge that we have about the time and place of most Sanskrit poems, there is an abundance of information about *Life of Vikramāṅka* (*Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, hereafter *VDC*) and its author Bilhaṇa. We can date the work with rare accuracy to the 1080s, most probably to the short period between 1085 and 1089.[1] The place is Kalyāṇa, or Kalyāṇi, capital of the Western Cālukya dynasty, during the long reign of its victorious monarch Vikramāditya VI (also known as Vikrama or Vikramāṅka, r. 1076–1126). We also know much about the life of Bilhaṇa before the composition of the *VDC*: his upbringing in Kashmir, which he left after completing his education sometime between 1062 and 1065,[2] and his subsequent career as a professional poet in some of the major centers of the Indian peninsula, such as Mathurā, Kānyakubja, Pryāga, Vārāṇasi, Somanātha, and the court of the Ḍāhala King Karṇa in Mt. Kālañjara, before his arrival at Kalyāṇa. The availability of this information is related to two salient features of the *VDC*: its explicit historical subject matter and its substantial biographical afterword. Bilhaṇa went out of his way to tell his readers where and when to place him.

1. Pathak 1966, 61; Warder 1992, 614.

2. As noted already by Bühler in the introduction to his 1875 edition of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* of Bilhaṇa, p. 23. Cf. Raghavan 1978, 842 and Kawthekar 1995, 17–18 for an estimate of 1062.

In more than one sense, a major theme of his work is precisely the place poets occupy in the world.

In this connection it is worth mentioning the place that later tradition allotted Bilhaṇa. The *VDC* is one of the most frequently quoted Sanskrit *kāvya*s. Dozens of its verses have been cited in anthologies compiled throughout the subcontinent. Many more verses of sources unknown to us have also been ascribed to Bilhaṇa by anthology compilers.[3] Quite a few later poets (from Maṅkha in Kashmir to Veṅkaṭādhvarin in the deep Tamil country), literary theorists (such as Ruyyaka and Appayya Dīkṣita), and commentators (like the famous Arjunavarmadeva in his commentary on the *Amaruśataka*), to say nothing of Kashmir's chronicler Kalhaṇa, have referred to, praised, or quoted Bilhaṇa.[4] In addition, Bilhaṇa has had an unusual posthumous career as the author of the renowned and much-loved *Caurapañcāśikā*—"The Fifty Poems of the Thief." Indeed, he is sometimes referred to simply by the nickname *cora*, "the Thief."[5] There is no way of verifying that Bilhaṇa did compose this collection, and indeed, the ascription seems quite doubtful.[6] Still, this popular collection somehow attached itself to Bilhaṇa and created for him a new biography. According to the *Caurapañcāśikā*'s framing narrative, recorded in later works such as the *Bilhaṇakāvya*, the poet had an illicit love affair with a princess entrusted to him as a Sanskrit student. Her father came to know of this affair and was about to execute Bilhaṇa, when the poet recited impromptu fifty poems. Each poem begins with the words "even now" (*adyāpi*) and ends with "I remember her" (*tāṃ smarāmi*), with longing descriptions of the beloved young princess in between. The king was so moved that he pardoned Bilhaṇa and gave him the hand of his daughter.[7]

3. For the details and numbers, see § F.

4. For very useful initial lists, see Misra 1976, 107–109 and Sternbach 1980, 101. For Arjunavarmadeva's nod to Bilhaṇa, see § F.

5. See, for example, *Viśvaguṇādarśacampū* of Veṅkaṭādhvarin, verse 549, where the Thief is the second in a long list of canonical poets. Note, however, that there were those who viewed Bilhaṇa and the Thief as two separate authors. An example is the Telugu author Peddana, who mentions the two separately in a list of glorious poets of the past (*Manucaritramu* of Peddana, 1.7). Clearly, much work needs to be done on the story of the Thief, which became extremely popular around the sixteenth century and circulated in languages such as Telugu, Marathi, and Tamil, in addition to Sanskrit.

6. One of the verses of the collection—the first in the northern recension—is quoted by Bhoja and hence must predate Bilhaṇa (Raghavan 1978, 842). In her study of the different recensions of the poem, Miller reached the conclusion that the ascription, although far from certain, is not entirely impossible (Miller 1971, 188–89).

7. The *Bilhaṇakāvya*, which is presented as if it were Bilhaṇa's own autobiographical account of this whole affair, offers one version of this story. See *Bilhaṇakāvya* ascribed to Bilhaṇa, 1–74 and 125–64, for the narrative framing the embedded love poems (75–124). For a synopsis of the story, see Kawthekar 1995, 42–45.

Like many such late medieval narratives, this (after)life of Bilhaṇa deals with the tense, indeed, dangerous relationship between poets and patrons and the power of poetry in deciding matters of life and death.[8] Beyond such recurring patterns, however, the story also picks out themes from Bilhaṇa's own poetry, his autobiographical account in the *VDC*, as well as several other afterlives attached to him. These consistently portray a poet living on the edge: he is hired for his poetry, in trouble because of his poetry, and sometimes out of trouble, again, thanks to his poetry. An ambivalent and almost renegade figure, he is occupied with carving a space for himself in a world that he perceives as essentially hostile and unworthy of his poetry. He is thus always on the road, ever on the verge of insulting his local interlocutors, always somewhat distanced from his subject matter, and at times explicitly resentful of his patrons. This essay sets out to show that a new poetics of ambivalence and alienation is the most distinctive feature of the *VDC*, the Thief's main work.[9]

B. Setting the Right(?) Tone: Bilhaṇa's Introductory Appeal to His Audiences

Bilhaṇa sandwiches his extensive narrative of King Vikrama's exploits—constituting the bulk of his 18-canto poem—between two personal statements: a short preface and a much longer biographical afterward. The preface is a statement about the author's literary ideals and the sociopolitical environment he inhabits, apropos the crucial question of the work's reception. Bilhaṇa addresses several audiences in connection with his quest for approval: a large pantheon of divinities, the collective of canonical poets, contemporary literati and critics, and the entire class of kings, which includes his former, current, and future patrons. Perhaps surprisingly, Bilhaṇa feels most confident of winning the endorsement of the first group. This is because only the divinities can be trusted to recognize good poetry when they hear it.

More specifically, the poem's first eight verses, which function as its necessary invocation, depict the deities as occupying a world of relative harmony. The realm of gods and goddesses is by no means monochromatic or free of tensions. On the contrary, what makes them so special is that they are perfectly capable of containing contrasts. The divinities are portrayed as complex entities made of

8. See, for example, the narratives recorded in Granoff 1995, 373–74 (on the tension between King Bhoja and Dhanapāla); cf. Shulman 1992 (on the Tamil corpus).

9. Bilhaṇa's other extant work, a drama titled *Karṇasundarī*, is the subject of Phyllis Granoff's essay in this volume.

conflicting elements, each of which embodies its opposite. Take, for example, Bilhaṇa's invocation of goddess Pārvatī for the protection of his readers:

> Her single breast looms large:
> it reaches almost up to her mouth
> to receive word, as it were, about the whereabouts
> of the other.
> That's our Daughter of the King of Mountains
> when she is half herself and half her lover.
> May she protect you![10]

This verse, with its daring imagery and playful attribution of human agency to insentient entities (*utprekṣā*), both of which are typical of Bilhaṇa, begins with an acute sense of asymmetry, split, and loss, epitomized by the image of a woman's sole, towering breast, longing for its missing partner. But this split turns out to be the outcome of, and hence the icon for, the tightest possible union, as Pārvatī, Daughter of the King of Mountains, combines herself with her lover, Śiva, to create a single new body: she is literally made of, or carries, half his body alongside half of hers (*priyârdha-sthitim udvahantyāḥ*). It is this Pārvatī—successfully containing both bodies, genders, and divine powers—whom Bilhaṇa invokes. In fact, Pārvatī appears in his preface only in this combined (*ardhanārīśvara*) form. Her partner Śiva, for his part, is also a symbol of tensions contained, because he manages both to soothe Pārvatī and to address his other lover Sandhyā at the same time (1.6).

A similar picture is found in Viṣṇu's household. Lakṣmī's image reflected in his sword is a constant reminder of Rādhā, Viṣṇu's other consort and Lakṣmī's rival (1.5). This state of contained opposition is also manifest in the chromatic imagery that Bilhaṇa employs to portray this god, who is compared with a black bee in a white lotus (1.2). The poem's opening verse contains another chromatic contrast when it describes Viṣṇu's sword. Its pitch-black blade reflects his handheld conch, which calls to mind the foam of the milky ocean that this god once churned (1.1). Viṣṇu's sword, then, is both black and white, solid and liquid, presence and memory—an amazing embodiment of coexisting opposites.

Why is the ability to contain opposites so important to Bilhaṇa? For one thing, it seems that frictions and tensions are a precondition for creativity,

10. *VDC* 1.4:
eka-stanas tuṅgataraḥ parasya vārttām iva praṣṭum agān mukhâgram /
yasyāḥ priyârdha-sthitim udvahantyāḥ sā pātu vaḥ parvata-rāja-putrī //
For a possible rejoinder in Telugu to this striking verse, see *Manucaritramu* of Pedanna, 1.4.

so long as they can be managed. Consider, in this connection, Bilhaṇa's all-important appeal to Sarasvatī, Poetry embodied:

> It is as if the planets envied the stardom of Guru,
> "Lord of Speech," and searched for their own
> weighty words, that they ended up as pearls
> strung on Sarasvatī's rosary.
> May She be favorable to you.[11]

The planet Guru (Jupiter) is known as the Lord of Speech, a status that rouses the jealousy of the other planets; note again the playful lending of human emotions and motivations to nonhumans. Yet Sarasvatī is easily, and quite literally, capable of handling these covetous heavenly bodies, who in her palm suddenly seem as petty as their aspirations. The whole image harkens back to Subandhu's famous verse about poets who have won Sarasvatī's favor and who therefore behold the entire world as if it were a tiny, handheld jujube.[12] Containing and controlling the bickering worlds (and words), it would seem, are the *sine qua non* of poetry.

Moreover, the state of union and the containment of contrasts are unambiguous indicators of true success. Sarasvatī's rosary with its bickering planets, just like Viṣṇu's sword of contrasting colors and Pārvatī's dual-gendered body, are signs of power and wholesomeness that are physically manifest for those capable of seeing them. Consider, likewise, Viṣṇu's chest, which combines another set of opposites. Bilhaṇa portrays its dark surface as a virtual touchstone (*kaṣa-paṭṭikā*), on which the gold of this god's good fortune (*saubhāgya-hemnaḥ*) is displayed in the form of the luminous sheen of his consort Śrī (1.3). The reference is to the process of inspecting metals by rubbing them against a piece of fine-grained dark schist: only pure gold leaves an unmistakable bright streak on its surface. The mention of the touchstone is significant. Bilhaṇa is convinced that if the gold of his poem were tested on the gods and goddesses, it would immediately be recognized. One indication of his remarkable self-confidence is the fact that nowhere in the benedictory verses does he seek the gods' protection or Sarasvatī's inspiration for himself. It is only for his readers that he pleads with Viṣṇu, Śiva, Pārvatī, and Poetry embodied, on whose grace (*prasāda*) he

11. *VDC* 1.7:
vacāṃsi vācaspati-matsareṇa sārāṇi labdhuṃ graha-maṇḍalīva /
muktâkṣa-sūtratvam upaiti yasyāḥ sā saprasādâstu sarasvatī vaḥ //

12. *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu, p. 1:
kara-badara-sadṛśam akhilam bhuvana-talaṃ yat-prasādataḥ kavayaḥ /
paśyanti sūkṣma-matayaḥ sā jayati sarasvatī devī //

can presumably count. Since the divinities embody the yardstick of quality, Bilhaṇa sees their approval as guaranteed. If only one were writing poetry in the world of Sarasvatī and the gods.

But unfortunately the poet inhabits the human realm, which Bilhaṇa envisions as ridden with contradictions and full of gaps that are extremely difficult to bridge. The poet, we learn, works in a thoroughly divided world. He faces canonical poets and upstarts, traditional literary tastes and new fashions, great poets and lousy ones, a few good critics and a hoard of nasty and professional faultfinders, some sensitive readers among many dull patrons, and not more than a handful of noble monarchs amid a sea of crooked politicians. Bilhaṇa accentuates these harsh divides with a series of paired verses, in which every second stanza starkly contradicts the first. One verse warns the canonical poets (*kavîndras*) about present-day literary thieves who are eager to loot the treasures of their poems. These new poets are thus reminiscent of the *asuras*, who were bent on grabbing the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) from the gods during the churning of the ocean (1.11). But the following verse takes the exact opposite position. The great poets of the past have no reason to worry: the ocean of literature is inexhaustible, and upstart writers are welcome to loot whatever they want (1.12). In one verse the poet boasts that good critics will love his work even though it departs from the older patterns and employs a cutting-edge style (1.13),[13] and in the next he bemoans the dullness of critics, who blunt good poetry in much the same way in which a hard rock blunts a knife (1.14).

More specifically, the opposition between two distinct poetic ideals is also presented in two succeeding verses. One extols the southern *vaidarbha* style, typically associated with Kālidāsa, as flowing pleasantly and without interruption like a "cloudless rain of nectar to the ears" (*an-abhra-vṛṣṭiḥ śravaṇâmṛtasya*). It is also highly traditional, "the very birthplace of Sarasvatī's elegant gestures" (*sarasvatī-vibhrama-janma-bhūmi*), and safe to use: the success of *vaidarbha* poetry is "money in the bank" (*saubhāgya-lābha-pratibhūḥ padānām*). But the next verse praises the bolder "flashy" (*citra*) style, often associated with Bāṇa and his followers. Verse in *citra* contains a complex arrangement of poetic tropes, reminiscent of an intricate musical concerto (*pañcama-nāda-mitra-citrôkti-sandarbha-vibhūṣaṇeṣu*), and it too is never devoid of Sarasvatī: poets who compose in this style are so illustrious that it seems as if this goddess, Poetry embodied, always plays her lute inside their mouths (*sarasvatī yad-vadaneṣu nityam ābhāti vīṇām iva vādayantī*).[14] Sarasvatī is thus capable of manifesting

13. The contrast is between *vaidarbha* and *vaicitrya* styles. More on the similar tension between *vaidarbha* and *citra* in the following paragraph.

14. *VDC* 1.9–10. Is Bilhaṇa alluding here to the Gauḍīya style? If so, the contrast he refers to may be also regional, not just aesthetic, pace Pollock 2006, 220.

herself in two very different styles, and the implication is that our poet, too, is proficient in using both in the same poem. Thus he too has the ability to embody contrasts—the very sign of quality. But whether the petty critics can appreciate such a fine mixture is an altogether different question.

Bilhaṇa, in other words, has an internal compass, but he feels that the realm he occupies is so polarized and its inhabitants are so misguided that his clear sense of direction will do him little good. This notion is expressed most intensely when the poet turns to address his readership directly. This is done in a series of verses that spell out some irreconcilable divide, usually in the first metrical half, and then heighten this divide with an illustration (*dṛṣṭānta*), typically in the second half: a poet's genius captivates the wise but not the dull, just like a fine needle can pierce a pearl but not a rock; readers who appreciate good poets know when to avoid ill ones, not unlike the musk deer that grazes the fragrant *granthi* leaf and avoids mere grass; poetasters can fool dull-minded critics but never sophisticated ones, just as water can extinguish fire but not the luster of precious stones (1.16–18).

Moving from the general to the personal, Bilhaṇa notes that ever since he left his homeland, he has been living and working in an environment totally devoid of cultural refinement:

> Poetic Genius must be Saffron's fellow citizen.
> Here's how I know: I haven't come across
> a trace of either, ever since I left
> the jurisdiction of Śāradā.[15]

Saffron, a rare and expensive spice, is a specialty of Kashmir. Bilhaṇa believes that the same is true of the equally rare quality of poesy. In fact, he has no qualms about saying to the face of his audience in the Deccan—to the degree that he, in fact, considers them a worthy audience—that they have no true poets in their midst and must import his like from the remote Himalayan valley.[16] Indeed, the verse uses a pun (*śleṣa*) to drive the point home: Kashmir (*śāradā-deśa*, or land of goddess Śāradā) is indeed the jurisdiction of Poetry (*śāradā-ādeśa*, taking Śāradā as a synonym for Sarasvatī). True, the author's celebration of himself as a rare commodity from Kashmir can be understood as lending prestige to his Cālukya employers, who managed to acquire his services. But the local audience could not have failed to detect a certain disdain in Bilhaṇa's voice.

15. *VDC* 1.21:
sahodarāḥ kuṅkuma-kesarāṇāṃ bhavanti nūnaṃ kavitā-vilāsāḥ /
na śāradādeśam apāsya dṛṣṭas teṣāṃ yad anyatra mayā prarohaḥ //

16. See Cox 2011 for a fine discussion of this verse in the context of the larger circulation of commercial and cultural commodities between Kashmir and the deep south.

I return to the Kashmiri component of Bilhaṇa's identity later, but for now let us stay with the more general sense of alienation as a condition of his being a poet. Surely there is pride in being the one true poet, the imported saffron that gives the otherwise watery local soup taste and color. But the preface also betrays the loneliness of a poet who almost by definition operates outside the jurisdiction of Poetry, with no one as his equal or peer. In fact, because fools populate all literary salons, one's gift becomes a liability (1.23). What appreciation can Bilhaṇa expect from those who would find even the succulent sugarcane unpalatable (1.20), and who, like camels, would always choose a thorny bush over a lush grove (1.29)?

In fact, toward the end of the short preface it becomes clear that Bilhaṇa feels most alienated when it comes to kings, the protagonists and patrons of his poetry. The contradictions that he has to manage when dealing with these difficult customers are the harshest. Think of the writer as a goldsmith, his poetry as the ornaments he fashions from gold or precious stones, and the king as the client. This is a standard metaphor that Bilhaṇa repeatedly invokes in order to express his profound doubt about the whole exchange (1.16, 18–19). For all he knows, his customer may be a brutish savage who simply has no clue about the value of the poet's craft:

> The number of fine feats on their résumés
> is zero. Can someone tell me why such kings
> assemble teams of poet laureates? Why in the world
> would berry-wearing forest dwellers
> appoint a jewelry designer in residence?[17]

Note the emphasis on résumés (*cāritra*, echoing *carita* in the poem's title). A king should be able to provide his poet with at least a few achievements to work with, for the process of poetic imagination cannot be entirely foundationless. Or perhaps it can? Bilhaṇa reaches the apex of his bitterness when he claims, conversely, that what kings actually do or do not do is of no significance whatever. It is only the poet's craft that matters. One may be a perfect ruler and be entirely forgotten if there is no true poet by his side (1.26). Moreover, the poet has the power to turn a hero into a villain and vice versa. Rāvaṇa's ignominy and Rāma's glory are cases in point. Both these lasting images from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are indicative of the power of First Poet Vālmīki and of nothing else (*sa sarva evâdikaveḥ prabhāvaḥ*). To make sure that the message is not lost (one should never take

17. *VDC* 1.25:
kiṃ cāru-cāritra-vilāsa-śūnyāḥ kurvanti bhūpāḥ kavi-saṃgraheṇa /
kiṃ jātu guñjā-phala-bhūṣaṇānāṃ suvarṇa-kāreṇa vane-carāṇām //

such things for granted when operating outside the jurisdiction of Poetry), Bilhaṇa spells out the necessary conclusion: "Kings better not rub their poets the wrong way!" (*na kopanīyāḥ kavayaḥ kṣitîndraiḥ*, 1.27).[18]

Before concluding the preface, Bilhaṇa hastens to add that King Vikrama, his current patron and subject matter, is by no means unworthy of praise. On the contrary, so illustrious are the deeds of this king that any poem of which he is the hero will be admired regardless of its literary merit (1.28). Indeed, the pearls and gems are already supplied by the history of the Cālukya dynasty; all that the poet/jeweler has to do is to string them together, and the outcome is sure to be a perfect piece of jewelry (1.30). But these declarations, although they may certainly soften the previous message, still cannot wipe it clean. The bitter and cynical tone has already sunk in, and the listeners—King Vikrama, whose fellow monarchs Bilhaṇa has just torn to shreds, and his courtiers, whose literary sensitivity he has just denounced in no uncertain terms—must now be on the edges of their seats, nervous to examine the ornament that the master from Kashmir has crafted in his workshop.

C. On Thickening: Imagining the Political in the *VDC*

It is not as if they were not nervous to begin with. King Vikrama had a few skeletons in his closet that called for treatment by the most delicate hand. By the mid-1080s there was probably no one in the Cālukya kingdom who had not heard of the fate of King Vikrama's siblings, his older brother Somadeva (also known as Someśvara II) and his younger brother Jayasiṃha. Vikrama had imprisoned or executed the former and had arrested or exiled the latter.[19] It would take a truly gifted poet to put a positive spin on these embarrassing events, and so the courtiers might have been willing to swallow some insults from their arrogant acquisition from Kashmir if, as he insinuated, he had the capacity to turn even a villain into a hero. But the fact that Bilhaṇa even mentioned this in his preface alongside his ominous reference to monarchs with dismal résumés must have caused the king's men's hearts to miss a beat, and his brief praise for Vikrama may not have entirely eased their concerns when he turned to his actual subject matter: the kingdom's sensitive political drama.

Bilhaṇa begins his narrative by going generations back, narrating the official story of the Cālukyas' mythic origin from the god Brahmā's cupped hand,

18. The same point is strongly reiterated in the work's penultimate verse (*VDC* 18.107). See McCrea 2010, 517–18, for a translation and discussion of both verses and their implication.

19. See the discussion of these "blots" on "the fame of Vikrama" in Pathak 1966, 62.

or *culuka* (1.46).[20] Turning to more recent memory, he begins with the exploits of Tailapa, Vikrama's great-grandfather, and gradually works his way down to his father, Āhavamalla (also known as Someśvara I). The courtiers can gradually relax. The Cālukya monarchs, it turns out, have heroically protected and expanded their realm, thereby proving to be worthy of their divine origin and of Bilhaṇa's craft. Consider, for example, the following description of Tailapa, still in the work's first canto:

> In the battlefield, it was the heat of his valor
> that made his hand sweat, so that his sword—
> a living form of Death to his foes—grew thick
> with pollen from the flurry of flowers
> that Indra kept pouring.[21]

It is not the actual skirmish with his enemies that makes a true hero like Tailapa swelter, but the sheer impact of his own hot valor. This internal quality, which also manifests itself externally in the successful handling of his foes, attracts the attention of the gods, those ardent connoisseurs of bravery, and their king, Indra, shows him his highest token of appreciation, a rain of flowers. Perspiration and pollen combine to coat Tailapa's sword, which his enemies view as the very embodiment of the dark god of death, with a colorful layer. The blade's thickening (*nibiḍatva*) is its divine and poetic stamp of approval. As with Viṣṇu's scimitar in the opening verses, Tailapa's varnished, multicolored sword is the touchstone of his distinct qualities.

Bilhaṇa continues to meditate on this same sharp object:

> His sword is black as a woman's eyeliner.
> The fame born of its tip is white.
> Here's why: it pillages paleness
> from the cheeks of enemies' wives,
> wan as a chunk of sugarcane.[22]

20. For a summary of this and similar origin myths of the Cālukyas in inscriptions and other sources, see Banerjee 2004, 185–87. For a discussion of the various shifts in the official genealogy of the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas and their new interest in historiography, see Pollock 2006, 148–61.

21. *VDC* 1.70:
śauryôṣmaṇā svinna-karasya yasya saṃkhyeṣu khaḍgaḥ pratipakṣa-kālaḥ /
purandara-prerita-puṣpa-vṛṣṭi-parāga-saṅgān nibiḍatvam āpa //

22. *VDC* 1.71:
yasyâñjana-śyāmala-khaḍga-paṭṭa-jātāni jāne dhavalatvam āpuḥ /
arāti-nārī-śara-kāṇḍa-pāṇḍu-gaṇḍa-sthalī-nirluṭhanād yaśāṃsi //

For further discussion of the question of the dark origins and nature of royal fame in this verse and others, see McCrea 2010, 517.

Again, chromatic contrasts somehow coexist in Tailapa. Fame is conventionally white in *kāvya*, but Bilhaṇa proposes to explain how it is that glory emerges so bright from the dark surface of his scimitar by resorting to another signature attribution. Fame's strange whitening, after all, takes place just at the time when the faces of his foes' wives also become ashen as they fear the worst when their husbands battle Tailapa. Fame is thus imagined as a robber, plundering their paleness. Note that it is not uncommon in *kāvya* to conflate military and erotic conquests or even to index one's martial achievements by the losses suffered by fair women on the other side.[23] But Bilhaṇa's imagery and attribution of agency to fame are original, and his combination of the pallidness of the women's cheeks with the eyeliner-black of the sword is striking, bringing his fascination with chromatic and emotional contrasts to new heights. Moreover, the wording involves more than just the import of vocabulary from the erotic to the heroic domain. The long compound spanning almost the entire length of the verse's second half incorporates a five-word sequence lifted straight from Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra* (*śara-kāṇḍa-pāṇḍu-gaṇḍa-sthalī*, "cheeks wan as a chunk of sugarcane"), where the context is indeed erotic.[24] So our poet, too, is involved in an act of plundering. The author who later came to be known by the nickname "the Thief" stole from Kālidāsa's coffers an entire chunk of poetry, just as he had warned that poets do.[25] At the same time, he put this stolen line to a radically new use, thereby proving his other earlier point, namely, that *kāvya* cannot be exhausted by such theft. All in all, the verse is an incredible example of Bilhaṇa's poetic intensification or "thickening": contrasting colors, images, attributions, emotional "flavors" (*rasa*s), and words from significant intertexts are carefully interwoven into the description of Tailapa's sword in a manner that calls attention both to this king's heroism and to Bilhaṇa's genius.

Similar images of weaponry continue to appear as the poet finally turns to King Vikrama, the work's main protagonist. Indeed, Bilhaṇa expands his methods of intensification by resorting to imagery that transcends the visual. Consider, for example, the following reference to Vikrama's bow by an envoy eulogizing the king in Canto 5:

> Your bow is soul mate to your arm.
> What foe in the front line can tolerate
> its twang, amplified by the wailing

23. For a discussion of a similar description of "might in the negative" and a conflation of military and erotic conquests in the corpus of the Sena poets, see Knutson 2010, 7–11, 19–25.

24. *Mālavikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa 3.8.

25. Indeed, the same verbal root *luṭhana* (looting) is used to describe both literary theft (*VDC* 1.11) and the pillaging of paleness (1.71).

of the doe-eyed darlings
back home?[26]

Note again the movement from embodied valor—here in the form of Vikrama's arm, from which the bow is as inseparable as a soul mate (*praṇayin*)—to the perceptible, external strum of his bowstring. Indeed, terrifying for the ears of enemy soldiers in the firing line, this sound is somehow carried all the way home, where it is manifest in the concurrent crying of the soldiers' bereaved wives. This amplification of the bow's twang by means of a different sound quality from afar is, therefore, just like the colorful thickening of Tailapa's sword, a token of universal recognition of true quality. Moreover, this verse is uttered by an envoy whose speech, we are told, *is* Sarasvatī (5.30), so that it may be that Poetry herself, through the envoy and ultimately the poet, signals her own recognition of Vikrama's unworldly valor by adding to the strumming of the bowstring (*nisvanaḥ*) a hypnotic, hissing alliteration (*asau samara-sīmni sahyate*). Bilhaṇa has an ear for sounds that consist of, manifest, or mask other sounds (for example, 5.19, 40), just as his eye is tuned to colors that contain their opposites and other complex textures.

Bilhaṇa also resorts to quite different means of poetic intensification. Particularly prominent in this context is his consistent attempt to fashion King Vikrama in the mold of Rāma. Bilhaṇa alludes to the Rāma template already at the outset when he narrates the origin of the Cālukyas: like Rāma, the first Cālukyas descended to earth after the gods appealed to Brahmā to save the world (1.40–57), and their original capital was the city of Ayodhyā, "where Rāma lived with Sītā after defeating Rāvaṇa" (*prasādhya taṃ rāvaṇam adhyuvāsa yāṃ maithilīśaḥ* 1.63). Then, when nothing in the north is left unconquered, the Cālukyas move south, where their subsequent successful campaign, not unlike Rāma's, reaches all the way to the southern shores and then to the island "kingdom of Vibhīṣaṇa" (1.64–66).

More important, Bilhaṇa repeatedly identifies Vikrama himself with Rāma. Rāma is not invoked in the context of Vikrama's triumph over a demonic enemy—a pattern that, Sheldon Pollock has argued, came to dominate Sanskrit political imagination shortly after the time of Bilhaṇa, coinciding with the rise of Muslim power in South Asia.[27] Rather, the Rāmazation of Vikrama highlights the latter's aversion to power and love for his siblings, even when they turn against him.[28] Indeed, portraying Vikrama as a brother-loving Rāma is at the

26. *VDC* 5.34:
tvad-bhuja-praṇayi-cāpa-nisvanaḥ kair asau samara-sīmni sahyate /
vyaktim eti ripu-mandireṣu yaḥ krandita-dhvanibhir eṇa-cakṣuṣām //

27. See Pollock 1993.

28. For an extensive discussion of male intimacy in the *VDC*, see Cox 2010.

heart of Bilhaṇa's poetic project, precisely because of the political circumstances described earlier. Consider the moment when the close resemblance between the protagonist and his mythical model is first announced. This takes place in the second canto, when Āhavamalla is performing an elaborate set of rituals to Śiva in order to beget sons. Appeased, Śiva tells Āhavamalla:

> Your efforts have won you two sons.
> But a third, born between them, is the gift
> of my goodwill. With his mighty two arms
> he will fetch Lady Fortune
> even from the ocean's other shore,
> just like Rāma.[29]

Like Rāma, Vikrama's birth results from divine intervention, and he too is predicted to bring Lady Fortune (*śrī*) from across the sea. But the comparison is somewhat imperfect. Rāma rescued Sītā, Śrī embodied, from the demon island of Laṅkā, whereas in Vikrama's case *śrī* refers either to some overseas loot that certainly involves no defeat of a demonic other or to his marriage to Candralekhā, a princess from a neighboring kingdom whose family traces its origin back to Laṅkā.[30] An even more striking discrepancy is the explicit mention of Vikrama as being sandwiched between his two brothers. This is because Rāma is the paradigmatic older brother, first in line to the throne and a father figure to his younger brothers, Lakṣmaṇa in particular.[31] Vikrama is famously not the oldest son, and Bilhaṇa's portrayal of him as a middle-born Rāma signals his bold plan to somehow turn this liability into an asset.

The daring approach resurfaces in Canto 3, when Āhavamalla is about to choose his heir apparent. Ignoring seniority altogether, he wishes to confer this status on Vikrama. The father's words "ring like the anklets of Sarasvatī" (3.29) when he tries to convince his beloved middle-born to consent (3.31). But Vikrama feels that Āhavamalla is entirely blinded by his fatherly love for him.

29. *VDC* 2.53:
suta-dvayaṃ te nija-karma-sambhavaṃ mama prasādāt tanayas tu madhyamaḥ /
payo-nidheḥ pāra-gatām api śriyaṃ sa dor-balād rāma ivâharisyati //

30. Warder 1972, 48. This verse resonates with the official language of Vikrama's inscriptions, and especially with a stanza that is repeated in both the Nīlgunda plates (1913–1914b, 153–54, lines 54–56) and the stone inscriptions from Yēwūr (Barnett 1912a, 278, lines 95–99) and is part of what Pollock has termed Vikrama's "letterhead." As Pollock 2006, 141, n. 55 notes, "The mythic meaning has for us entirely occluded the factual except for a few obvious correlations, e.g., that a Cōḷa king declared himself to be Vikramāditya's vassal during some expedition to the south."

31. On brotherly relationship in Vālmīki and on Rāma's fatherlike position, see Goldman 1980.

His answer is affectionate and beautiful—he too is compared with Sarasvatī here (3.33)—but amounts to a polite refusal. Disregarding the order of birth, he warns, would amount to destroying the family's good name (3.36–38). Someśvara should therefore be king, while Vikrama himself will happily embrace the status of the king's loyal foot soldier (3.39). To drive this point home, Vikrama cites the negative example of Daśaratha, Rāma's father:

> By transgressing order and making Bharata
> his heir, Rāma's father went down in infamy:
> To this day, wherever you turn, he is known
> as "the pawn of women."[32]

This clinches the argument. Threatened with the ignominy of Daśaratha, who was maneuvered by his wife Kaikeyī to anoint the junior Bharata and to exile the first-born Rāma, Āhavamalla appoints his senior son heir apparent. What is remarkable here is that Bilhaṇa casts Someśvara, Vikrama's brother-turned-enemy, as the family's Rāma and puts Vikrama in the role of Bharata. Note, however, that this unprecedented reversal of the Rāma template serves to establish Vikrama's complete indifference to power and his utter refusal to unseat his brother, even at the price of turning his father down. Thus Bilhaṇa cleverly insinuates that it is precisely because Vikrama is such a devoted younger brother that he is the real Rāma in the family. This trend intensifies later in the work, in the aftermath of Āhavamalla's death. With his father dead, Vikrama is said to willfully embrace exile in a manner that is reminiscent of Rāma's behavior after the death of his father. Even when Someśvara marches after him with his army, Vikrama, just like Rāma before him, is keen on avoiding conflict at any cost. It is only when war with Someśvara is no longer avoidable and following a direct dictum from an increasingly impatient god Śiva that Vikrama, in self-defense, fights and captures his brother.[33]

Bilhaṇa, in other words, is clearly aware of the problem inherent in applying the Rāma template to Vikrama's story, and he ingeniously turns this problem to his hero's advantage. Needless to say, there are other sides to this story. In fact, a later biography of Vikrama written by his own son appears to starkly contradict Bilhaṇa's version, according to which Someśvara was first crowned unopposed and then deposed following his attack on his peace-loving brother. In this other

32. *VDC* 3.40:
rāmasya pitrā bharato 'bhiṣiktaḥ kramaṃ samullaṅghya yad ātma-rājye /
tenôthitā strī-jita ity akīrtir ādyâpi tasyâsti dig-antareṣu //

33. Note, for example, that throughout Canto 6, where the conflict between the two brothers unfolds, Bilhaṇa carefully and consistently calls Vikrama "prince" and Someśvara "king," thereby insinuating that the former respects the superior status of the latter.

biography it is Vikrama who is made crown prince when he is only 16, presumably in order to assert his claim to the throne at the expense of his brother.[34] Or consider the diplomatic and military maneuvers of the exiled Vikrama, which appear to be a typical case of cementing external alliances in the hope of regaining power at home. These are portrayed in the poem as resulting from the prince's desire to benefit the kingdom that estranged him and as stemming from his deep obligation to protect friendly kings.[35] Bilhaṇa, then, is invested in portraying his protagonist as a disinterested party, forced to take part in the political game. He is a Rāma who did not want to become one, and it is this, more than anything else, that truly makes him Rāma-like.

In depicting his Vikrama as an unwilling hero who becomes king despite his resistance at every step of the way, Bilhaṇa follows Bāṇa, the famous court poet of Emperor Harṣa (r. 606–47). Bilhaṇa knowingly emulates Bāṇa's solution to a similar political problem. This is because, like Vikrama, Harṣa was sandwiched between an older brother (Rājyavardhana) and a powerful brother-in-law (Grahavarman), who was wedded to his younger sister (Rājyaśrī). But, as Bāṇa reports in his *Life of Harṣa* (*Harṣacarita*), all of Harṣa's potential competitors disappeared almost at once. When the older brother was on the frontline fighting the Huns and the younger sister was away with her husband, the father (Prabhākara) suddenly died. Then the brother-in-law was assassinated by the king of Mālwa, and the sister was abducted. Harṣa's older brother set out to avenge this assassination and redeem his sister, only to be treacherously murdered by the king of the Gaudas. Harṣa alone was left, and he unwillingly assumed power only in order to rescue his sister and punish the evil doers. As I argue elsewhere, Bāṇa too may have been hired to put a positive spin on the ascendancy of a junior prince to power, which, as A. K. Warder has already noted, might have been "less exemplary."[36] Indeed, in both cases a second-born prince was fated to be king: Vikrama was ordained by Śiva, and Harṣa by the full set of physical marks that dot the limbs of born kings and that, "as it were, held fast to his arms and legs and, ignoring his protests, forcefully dragged him to the throne and placed him on it."[37]

34. *Vikramāṅkābhyudaya* of Someśvara p. 54. This work has reached our hands incomplete, and the extant text covers only a very small portion of Vikrama's story. Note also that in the *VDC* itself, Bilhaṇa depicts Vikrama as a defacto *yuvarāja* (esp. *VDC* 3.57ff.). For a more detailed comparison of the *VDC*'s version to other Cālukya sources see McCrea 2010, 508–11.

35. For more on Bilhaṇa's sublimation of the political by means of the personal see Cox 2010.

36. See Bronner 2010, 53–55. The quote is from Warder 1972, 46.

37. *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa, p. 119:
anicchantam api balād āropayitum iva siṃhāsanaṃ sarvâvayaveṣu sarva-lakṣaṇair gṛhītam.

Bilhaṇa is clearly aware of Bāṇa's work, the only political biography in Sanskrit that has been passed to us from the first millennium C.E. He emulates Bāṇa not only in portraying a hero predestined to rule but averse to his destiny, but also in inserting his own story into the poem about his hero. This intertextual nod is the final act of poetic intensification in Bilhaṇa's project. Vikrama is not only a heroic fighter who, much like Rāma, will do everything he can to avoid war with his brothers. He is also, it is implied, an empire builder of Harṣa's magnitude, and, like him, he is worthy of Bilhaṇa, a poet of Bāṇa's caliber.

D. On Thinning: Unimagining the Political in the *VDC*

So did Vikrama and his men finally relax in their seats? Did not the poet from Kashmir give them his stamp of approval? After all, he cleared Vikrama of any wrongdoing and glorified him to the extent that V. S. Pathak dubs Bilhaṇa a "defence counsel," and his poem a "defence plea" that lent the king "a halo of epic magnanimity."[38] There are, however, numerous points in the *VDC* where Bilhaṇa appears to knowingly flatten the very poetic construction he has so meticulously built. These consist of conspicuous gaps and loud silences that are at least as potent as the intensifications and reverberations discussed earlier, and that allow the poet to express and even foreground an undying ambivalence toward his subject matter.

To begin with, consider the already-mentioned incongruity between the *Rāmāyaṇa* template and the story of Vikrama. A basic feature of the Rāma mytheme, as Pollock has demonstrated, is the birth through divine intervention of a creature who escapes the categories "god" and "human" in order to defeat a powerful demon who has already attained immunity from either.[39] The ten-headed Rāvaṇa, a monster terrorizing the world unopposed, is a necessary precondition for Rāma's appearance. Moreover, as Pollock has also shown, one of the main breakthroughs of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, when seen against the backdrop of the *Mahābhārata*, is that violence is strictly forbidden in the familial and the political arenas and is permitted only in the exotic, demonic realm. What the *Mahābhārata* "brothers," says Pollock, the *Rāmāyaṇa* "others."[40] But a demonic enemy is entirely absent from the *VDC*, where Vikrama's major military achievements are indeed two hard-won victories over his own siblings. It is therefore not entirely clear why Brahmā, Śiva, and the other gods should have intervened

38. The quotes are from Pathak 1966, 58, 69, 71.
39. Pollock 1991, 29–43.
40. Pollock 1993, 283.

to bring forth the Cālukyas and, later, Vikrama himself, if the result is this intrafamilial power struggle. This is one point on which the poet is silent, a silence he himself foregrounds.

Take, for example, his description of the Cālukyas' origins from Brahmā's handful (*culuka*) of ritual water. Brahmā is in the midst of his twilight rites when Indra suddenly arrives to see him. As is often the case, Indra needs help with some emergency, and after some mandatory praises he gets right to the point:

> My agents are reporting such turmoil on earth, Lord,
> that due share of the sacrifice—
> our timeless privilege as gods—
> will soon become, I'm afraid,
> a matter of memory.[41]

Precisely at the point where Bilhaṇa's predecessors—think, for example, of Māgha in the *Śiśupālavadha*—would revel in describing the monstrosity and terrifying deeds, past and present, of a demon who has become the terror of the gods, Bilhaṇa's Indra is extremely tightlipped. He merely notes that the world is in a state of turmoil (*viplava*) that endangers what, for the gods, is of crucial importance: the continued performance of sacrificial rites.[42] There is nothing Indra can add, and he admits that he is loath to speak (*kiṃ vā bahûktaiḥ*, 1.43). It is as if the poet, too, is suddenly at a loss for words. Language unexpectedly becomes thin in a process that completely inverts the thickening described earlier. The divine, mythic frame almost collapses under its own weight, and its collapse is punctuated by the warning that concludes Indra's wry remark. The gods, by definition, never age (*nirjara*), but they are about to be reduced to a situation not unlike that of the elderly, when joys taken for granted in the past become the subject of fading memories.

Reluctance to elaborate, or even explicit protest against the obligation to develop some themes that are at the heart of the story, is voiced throughout the poem. Take for example a scene from much later in the work that is closely reminiscent of Indra's interview with Brahmā. Here a close aide briefs King Vikrama himself:

> When the rainy season grew old and its clouds paled
> like white hair, one of the king's confidants

41. *VDC* 1.44:
niveditaś cāra-janena nātha tathā kṣitau samprati viplavo me /
manye yathā yajña-vibhāga-bhogaḥ smartavyatām eṣyati nirjarāṇām //

42. One could perhaps argue that the verse alludes to the rise of Muslim rulers in South Asia, who in later literature are sometimes described as endangering the sacrifice, but there is nothing either here or elsewhere in the poem to support this hypothesis.

appeared and apprised him in private:
"There's something harsh I must report.
Please forgive me, King of Kuntala.
Regardless of the news he bears,
a king should never blame
a faithful messenger."[43]

This agent, too, is extremely reluctant to deliver his message, and his apology seems to be shared by the poet—another messenger who may want to be judged by his skill and dedication rather than by his subject matter. Incidentally, here too, Bilhaṇa refers to aging, as if the matter in question would instantly turn one's hair white.

The message that the messenger is reluctant to deliver is that Vikrama's younger brother, whom he has appointed regent in Vanavāsa, has adopted a "highly disruptive policy" (*naya-viparyayo mahān*, 14.4). Departing from the just path (*nyāya-mārgam apahāya*), the brother now enriches his coffers (*kurvatā tena kośam*) by exploiting all the subjects (*sakala-loka-pīḍanāt*) and rendering the land desolate (*udvihāra-hariṇāḥ kṛtā bhuvaḥ*, 14.5). This is as far as this brief, two-verse report goes. The informant does not even name the renegade Jayasiṃha. Instead, he launches into an elaborate description of elephants, a topic with which he, not unlike Bilhaṇa, is far more comfortable. He depicts these animals in great detail—their tusks, the secretion they emit when in heat, their fanlike ears—using the most luxurious poetic idiom. But how exactly are these magnificent beasts related to the problem at hand?

You lovingly bestowed on him
not a few of these fine elephants,
and with their force he's plotting something
even the mention of which is a crime.[44]

So despicable is the topic spoken of that the mere mention of it is criminal. All that the messenger can grudgingly bring himself finally to add is that by means of brutality and bribery the brother gained control over the "forest regions,"

43. *VDC* 14.1–2:
vārdhakaṃ dadhati vāridâgame mūrdhajair iva ghanair vipāṇḍuraiḥ /
vikramāṅkam upasṛtya nirjane kaścid āptapuruṣo vyajijñapat //
niṣṭhuraṃ kimapi kathyate mayā tatra kuntala-pate kuru kṣamām /
yat sva-kāryam avadhīrya gṛhṇate sevayâiva paritoṣam īśvarāḥ //

44. *VDC* 14.10:
vatsalena bhavatā samarpitās tasya te kati na gandha-sindhurāḥ /
tad-balāt kimapi cintayaty asau yat-kathâpi vitanoti pātakam //

won the alliance of the Tamil king, and is now poised "to crush your army" (14.11–12). He then concludes his report:

> To make a long story short...
> I know it sounds far-fetched,
> but trust me, king, it's real:
> It is a matter of days before he'll confront you
> on the bank of the Kṛṣṇā.[45]

Again the language is laconic, businesslike, and unornamented. The speaker wishes "to make a long story short," definitely not the typical *kāvya* impulse. Of course, disinclination even to speak of such treachery is in itself a trope, reflecting on the nobility of the king and his men. Thus in response to this briefing, the king is profoundly dismayed and indignant at fate, and he launches, not for the first time in the poem, into a soliloquy about the utter inexplicability of such behavior by others, let alone his own brother (14.15–21). Still, I believe that this reluctance to speak also reflects the poet's own ambivalence toward his subject matter. Bilhaṇa advances the plot reluctantly, in fits and starts. After the soliloquy he digresses into a long description of autumn (14.23–45). Then he returns to narrate the pious Vikrama's repeated attempts to prevent a conflict by a variety of conciliatory gestures, all of which fall on Jayasiṃha's deaf ears (14.48–56), before concluding, again, with a protest: "Why say more?" (*brūmahe kim adhikam*, 14.57).

Finally, when a showdown is no longer avoidable and Vikrama is forced to defend himself and his kingdom, Bilhaṇa seems to switch gears. He willingly dwells on a whole set of *kāvya*'s favorite battle objects, such as drums, conches, elephants, warriors, arrows, and swords. Heroism again comes to the fore, enhanced by various tropes and reverberations. These include lingering over the aesthetics of blood and carnage, an area where Bilhaṇa is very much at home. King Vikrama's actual warfare, then, certainly provides the poet with scope for description (*varṇanâspadam*), as he himself remarks, almost in relief (15.73). But the troubling identity of Vikrama's opponent is silenced. In the eighty-seven verses dedicated to narrating this crucial battle—an entire canto of the work—Bilhaṇa employs a whole set of generic synonyms for "enemy" (*para, pratipakṣa, ripu, prativīra, ari, dviṣat*, and so on). But the enemy's name never surfaces, nor is there anything in the text that remotely insinuates his identity. The entire drama of the battle is described, formulaically, as the rescuing of triumph from the jaws of defeat: the enemy troops initially have the upper hand until Vikrama single-handedly breaks their lines and leads his army to a marvelous victory.

45. *VDC* 14.13:
bhūribhiḥ kim athavā kathâdbhutais tattvam etad avadhāryatāṃ nṛpa /
kaiścid eva divasaiḥ sa saṃmukhaḥ kṛṣṇa-veṇi-nikaṭe bhaviṣyati //

Only in the very last verse do we find a hint at the realities underlying this theater of bravery. Bilhaṇa reports briefly that the "thorn of the lineage" (*kula-kaṇṭaka*) has been captured, that Vikrama "spoke to him, choked with tears of compassion," and then rewarded or pardoned him (*kāruṇyôdgata-bāṣpa-gadgada-padaḥ saṃbhāṣya saṃtoṣya ca*, 15.87). After this, Jayasiṃha is never mentioned again.

E. On Ambivalence: Bilhaṇa's Poetic Stance

Bilhaṇa's poetic biography, then, is audacious and verbose on a whole range of topics, from the carcasses of elephants to Pārvatī's single breast, and from the king's warfare to his erotic exploits (a subject that I have left out of the discussion but that occupies a prominent position in the *VDC*). But in addition to topics that provide him with fertile ground for his imagination, there are those he would rather unimagine and gloss over. There are key moments when gaps between the intensifying mythical framework and the human actions to which it is attached become dangerously wide, and the whole poetic structure threatens to collapse. These silences and gaps, often foregrounded and thematized, reflect a basic ambivalence inherent in Bilhaṇa's poetry. This ambivalence is particularly conspicuous when we compare the *VDC* with one of its most important intertexts, the aforementioned *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa.

Both Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* and Bilhaṇa's *VDC* were quite unusual for their time because each poem depicted the tenure of a contemporary king and narrated its author's own life story. But there is a crucial difference in the way the works knit the biographical and the autobiographical together. For Bāṇa, the personal account is a prelude to the story of Emperor Harṣa. He begins by portraying himself: an orphaned youth living on the fringes, making a name for himself by frequenting literary salons with a group of colorful friends. Then, out of the blue, comes the emperor's invitation to join his court. Bāṇa's first meeting with Harṣa is basically described as a falling in love. Indeed, the passage that describes Bāṇa as he moves from the exterior of Harṣa's royal camp, through a series of concentric walls and retinues, to the king's meeting hall, and then the movement of the author's eyes on Harṣa's body, feet to head, is fashioned after a description of a lovers' first meeting by Bāṇa's most important predecessor, Subandhu (in the parallel passage, Subandhu's hero Kandarpaketu first lays his eyes on Vāsavadattā, the beloved from his dreams).[46] Moreover, this meeting is

46. Compare *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu, 282–305, with *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa, 110–31. See also Bronner 2010, 49–50, 53–55, for a brief discussion of both the passages. For further discussion of Subandhu, see Chapter 9 in this volume.

the beginning of a meaningful relationship with the king, whose personality and charisma Bāṇa comes to admire. It is clear that the meeting with Harṣa marks the climax of Bāṇa's life and, indeed, subsumes it, for it is at this point that Bāṇa turns from narrating his own story to telling that of his new hero.

In the *VDC*, on the other hand, there is no mention of a meeting between Bilhaṇa and Vikrama, and there is nothing to suggest that the two had a personal bond. Moreover, Bilhaṇa's own story does not lead to that of his current patron but rather is appended to it. His is not the tale of a youth who suddenly had it made by landing the job of a poet laureate, but the memoir of a seasoned and cynical poet who has "been there, done that." The bulk of his account is a nostalgic and loving description of Kashmir, a land he left in his youth in order to embark on the career of an itinerant writer. Bilhaṇa is now contemplating a possible homecoming to Kashmir, where an unusually refined and generous king whose name also happens to be Harṣa has just ascended the throne (18.46). The implication is that joining this king may be the appropriate ending to the poet's story. As for Vikrama, the hero of the just-completed poem, he is presented in the addendum as just one of Bilhaṇa's many stints, another line in his curriculum vitae. Whereas Bāṇa embraces Harṣa wholeheartedly, Bilhaṇa maintains a distant, ambivalent stance throughout his poem. To examine this ambivalence, let us return one last time to the poem and consider its sixth canto, where the crucial events leading to Vikrama's coronation unfold.

This canto finds Prince Vikrama at the low point of his political career. Exiled from capital Kalyāṇa, currently ruled by his hostile older brother Someśvara, and camped out on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā, he is frantically trying to create an independent power base. But his efforts, focused primarily on allying the neighboring Chola kings, suffer blow after blow. He marries the Chola princess, only to learn soon thereafter that the Chola king, his new father-in-law and ally, has been assassinated (6.7).[47] A military expedition to install the slain king's son on the Chola throne ends in a fiasco: within weeks King Rājiga of Veṅgi deposes Vikrama's newest ally (6.26). If these setbacks were not enough, Rājiga and Someśvara coordinate a joint attack on Vikrama: Rājiga from the front and Someśvara from the rear (6.27).

It is at this moment that Bilhaṇa seems most sympathetic to his hero. This is perhaps because the prince, like him, is exiled to a harsh terrain and faces almost insurmountable adversities from opposing poles. Bilhaṇa describes Vikrama not very differently from the way he imagines himself: an individual who prevails in the most challenging situation by maintaining his moral compass and confidence. Indeed, by the canto's end Vikrama almost single-handedly

47. For further discussion of his ties with this Chola king, see Cox 2010, 490–94.

defeats both attacking armies. Moreover, as we have come to expect, Bilhaṇa brilliantly turns Vikrama's political plight into a virtue. For example, his unceremonious coronation—carried out in the countryside with no fanfare nor witness—turns under Bilhaṇa's pen into an amazing celebration by nature itself: winds carry Ganges water to anoint him, lotuses are in charge of blowing the conches (which are really white geese), and elephants occupy the percussion section in a resounding celebration of cosmic proportions (6.94–98).

But as sympathetic as the poet is to Vikrama's predicament, he never forgets that serving this king is his own plight and exile. Bilhaṇa's resentment of this fact is particularly audible when he ostensibly speaks in Vikrama's own voice, reporting his thoughts after learning of his brother's imminent attack. Here he bemoans in no uncertain terms the treachery, hypocrisy, cowardice, and utter wretchedness of certain bad kings (*kupārthiva*, 6.29), monarchs who depart from the path of justice (*avinaya-patha-vartin*, 6.30) and are simply wicked (*dagdha*, 6.31, 33). As we already know from Bilhaṇa's introduction, the folly of such kings is one of his favorite topics, and it therefore comes as little surprise that he elaborates on it in this context. Slightly more surprising is the notion expressed here that power, even though it is bound to escape evildoing kings (3.29, 30), necessarily corrupts even the just ones. Thus the very association with Śrī—the embodiment of wealth and royal power who is never truly dependable in the first place (*no bhareṇa kṣipati padam*, 6.28)—necessarily taints a king (*kalaṅkam ātanoti*, 6.35).[48]

Such thoughts, if indeed they are still in Vikrama's voice, serve to strengthen his image as averse to power. But it is hard not to hear in them also the voice of the resentful court poet, particularly when the speaker, as if unintentionally, switches from speaking about bad kings to speaking about kings in general. Take the following verse, for example, which is couched between two stanzas that specifically speak of evil monarchs—the adjective *dagdha*, "charred," is particularly strong—but makes no such stipulation itself:

> They're totally walled in by their gatekeepers.
> Hell! Kings must think there's *nothing*
> out there. They never take a second,
> natural fools that they are, to worry about the world
> that's coming.[49]

48. For further discussion of Bilhaṇa's uniquely dark vision of Śrī, see McCrea 2010, 517.

49. *VDC* 6.32:
sakalam api vidanti hanta śūnyaṃ kṣiti-patayaḥ pratihāra-vāraṇābhiḥ /
kṣaṇam api para-loka-cintanāya prakṛti-jaḍā yad amī na saṃrabhante //

There are several aspects of this verse—presumably conveying the king's inner thoughts—that, to my ears, ring with Bilhaṇa's distinct, private voice. First, the complaint that kings are totally out of touch with the real world, or see it as devoid of anyone who can harm or stop them (another possible translation for *sakalam api vidanti hanta śūnyam*), sounds far more natural in the mouth of an outsider than in that of a prince born to power. Second, the blunt assertion that kings are "natural fools" (*prakṛti-jaḍa*) is not exactly what we would expect to hear from a proud scion of the Cālukya line. Third, the pun on the word "nothing" (*śūnya*) charges the verse with a very unusual tone. Kings, living in their strange aloof reality, come to think, not unlike Buddhists, that the world out there is empty or devoid of meaning (another meaning of *śūnya*), which explains their godless behavior. This leads to the verse's stunning conclusion: kingship not only corrupts but is also inimical to one's core values and is on a par with heresy (embodied here by a highly unsympathetic view of Buddhism). One wonders how well such a line was received by King Vikrama, its primary audience and patron.

F. Afterlives and Afterthoughts: Bilhaṇa's Posthumous Career and Its Lessons

I have by no means exhausted the richness of Bilhaṇa's vast *VDC*, but in keeping with the focus of this discussion, I wish to conclude by briefly examining some of the stories that attached themselves to Bilhaṇa's legendary figure and the poetry that was ascribed to him posthumously. Although it is certainly plausible that some of the verses with which the anthologies credited him and that are not found in any of his known works were indeed by Bilhaṇa, it is eminently clear that many of them were not.[50] On the other hand, the intriguing consistency with which certain types of poems and anecdotes gravitate toward his persona must be seen, as in other cases, as a commentary on his poetic legacy.[51] Afterlives of poets always strangely mirror their actual lives.

The corpus of verses ascribed to Bilhaṇa in later anthologies is remarkable. Ludwik Sternbach counted 170 such verses, which make Bilhaṇa one of the five most cited Sanskrit poets according to the data Sternbach provides: only Kālidāsa,

50. For the estimate that many of Bilhaṇa's "new" verses are not genuine and for the possible confusion among anthology compilers between Bilhaṇa, Śilhaṇa, and Ralhaṇa, see Sternbach 1980, 98–101.

51. For a similar formulation regarding the Telugu *cāṭu* verses and oral narratives that accompany them, see Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998, 135–48.

Kṣemendra, Bhānukara, and Rājaśekhara have more verses attributed to them.[52] Less than half these verses can be traced back to Bilhaṇa's two extant works, and virtually all of those to the *VDC*.[53] There is only one verse from the other work whose ascription to Bilhaṇa is beyond doubt, the *Karṇasundarī*.[54] The selection of these quotes is itself never random and merits a separate discussion, but it seems reasonable to suspect that the vastly disproportionate preference for Bilhaṇa's *VDC* may, in part, reflect a fascination with its translocal concerns (including his appeal to audiences in far-off Kashmir), the place he carves for himself in this work (including in his preface and autobiographical afterword), and his unique personal voice in it. This impression solidifies when we consider some of the verses that are attributed to Bilhaṇa but that do not come out of any known work by him.

Let us begin with the simple observation that later tradition readily imagined Bilhaṇa, a poet whose entire career was spent in the plains of the Indian subcontinent, as belonging to the northern vale of Kashmir. For instance, less than a century after the composition of the *VDC*, the Kashmiri poet and chronicler Kalhaṇa gave Bilhaṇa an honorable mention in his magisterial account of Kashmir's court history, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*. The very first word in Kalhaṇa's salute to Bilhaṇa is *kaśmīrebhyaḥ* ("from Kashmir"), a lexical choice that both appropriates the poet to his original homeland and echoes the opening of the second part of Bilhaṇa's autobiographical account, where he details his adventures as an itinerant poet.[55] Kalhaṇa briefly mentions some of the highlights of Bilhaṇa's career in the Deccan and then reports that as soon as the poet heard that Harṣa, a generous man (*tyāgin*) and a friend of real poets (*sukavi-bāndhava*), had become king of Kashmir, he realized that the hefty rewards conferred on him by Deccani kings were meaningless or fraudulent (*bilhaṇo vañcanāṃ mene vibhūtiṃ tāvatīm apī*) and resolved to return home.[56] Kalhaṇa, then, echoes and magnifies Bilhaṇa's

52. See Sternbach 1980, 95, for the number of 170 verses ascribed to him, and Sternbach 1978, 42–45, for statistics on oft-quoted poets and the number of verses ascribed to each (here Bilhaṇa is credited "only" with 150 verses quoted in the anthologies, and if this more conservative number is true, Kāmandaka and Murāri also surpass him with 163 and 156 credited verses respectively). The data concerning Bilhaṇa's quotes given in Misra 1976, 52–106, are very similar.

53. At least 73 of the *VDC*'s verses are quoted once or more in the five anthologies Misra has checked, with a total of at least 103 instances (Misra 1976, 65–68).

54. Misra 1976, 81–82. Misra's identification of the *Karṇasundarī* verse in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* is indicative of the speed with which Bilhaṇa's poetry spread, because Vidyākara, the compiler of this anthology, was probably his contemporary. This confirms Bilhaṇa's boast of enjoying widespread fame (*VDC* 18.88–89).

55. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa 7.935; cf. *VDC* 18.86. Incidentally, the first word of the first part of Bilhaṇa's autobiographical account is *kāśmīreṣu* ("in Kashmir," *VDC* 18.1), and the first word of the second part of this account is *kāśmīrebhyaḥ* ("from Kashmir," 18.86).

56. *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa 7.935–937; cf. *VDC* 18.64.

own sense of belonging in Kashmir and his contempt for the Deccan. His comment is also the first clue to a tradition according to which Bilhaṇa's tenure with Vikrama may have not ended on a happy note. At any rate, it was not just compatriots like Kalhaṇa who saw Bilhaṇa as part of the cultural heritage of Kashmir. Arjunavarmadeva, the thirteenth-century scholar from Malva and author of an important commentary on the *Amaruśataka*, may have begun the trend of referring to Bilhaṇa as "Bilhaṇa of Kashmir" (*kāśmīraka-bilhaṇa*). Indeed, he did so in connection with a verse he ascribed to Bilhaṇa, and it is likely that the sole reason for this ascription of a verse others have cited anonymously is its portrayal of the moon as "fairer than a Kashmiri maiden's breast."[57] No one has described Kashmir and its women more lovingly than the homesick Bilhaṇa, in the autobiographical section of his poem, and in the eyes of posterity he both belonged in the northern vale and "owned" it as a topic. It is perhaps not surprising that no verse describing the beauty of any Deccani site was ever ascribed to Bilhaṇa after his death.

It should also come as little surprise that in the corpus of verses posthumously attributed to Bilhaṇa there are two stanzas that indulge in mocking fellow poets: one ridicules poet wannabes who merely plagiarize the poems of others, and another sneers at those who prostitute Sarasvatī by exposing her naked.[58] Two verses may not seem like a whole lot, but many anthologies include only a handful of poems that critique poets (*kukavi-nindā*). Thus the fact that Śārṅgadhara credits Bilhaṇa with two out of only six such poems in his *Paddhati* is significant, indicating, perhaps, that Bilhaṇa came to be associated with this genre. Again, negative evidence seems to corroborate this notion: no verse in praise of poets (*kavi-praśaṃsā*) has ever been ascribed to Bilhaṇa, a posthumous silence that highlights his omission to mention even a single predecessor by name in his vast *VDC*.[59] Possibly related to the two attacks on fellow poets are

57. *Amaruśataka* of Amaru ad v. 32: *kāśmīri-kuca-kumbha-vibhrama-dharaḥ śubhrâṃśuḥ*; cf. Misra 1976, 74–75, where the pattern of citing this verse in the anthologies is detailed. The translation is by Ingalls 1965, 258.

58. *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 9.3–4; *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa 5.1–2; cf. Misra 1976, 79–80. Note that in both anthologies the two verses are paired, although whereas Śārṅgadhara ascribes both to Bilhaṇa, Jalhaṇa credits Kṣemendra with the first and Ralhaṇa (a name sometimes associated with Bilhaṇa) with the second.

59. The only scholars and poets whom Bilhaṇa mentions by name in this poem are those belonging to his family (*VDC* 18.75–85), Vālmīki, and one Gaṅgādhara, a poet whom Bilhaṇa has humiliated (*nītvā gaṅgādharam adharatām*) in the court of the Ḍāhala king (*VDC* 18.95). Consider, by contrast, the large corpus of poems in praise of poets ascribed to Bilhaṇa's influential predecessor Rājaśekhara, or his important predecessor Bāṇa, who may have inaugurated such praises in Sanskrit poetry. On the influence of Rājaśekhara on Bilhaṇa's *Karṇasundarī*, see Granoff in this volume; on Bāṇa's praise of poets, see Pollock 1995, 448–51.

five allegorical poems (*anyokti, anyāpadeśa*) attributed to Bilhaṇa that deal with lions, elephants, and jackals. These poems assert that the roar of the lion is something that the elephant cannot match, and that if an elephant trumpets, it must be that it has not yet heard a real lion roar.[60] But it is the jackals, scavengers that feed off such majestic animals, that are the real butt of scorn here. The stanzas portray their cries as pathetic when compared with the lion's roar,[61] warn the jackals that even a wounded lion can be dangerous if provoked,[62] and bemoan the fate of some great elephants, whose bellow even lions once feared, but who have now fallen prey to jackals.[63] As with many allegorical verses, it is not always easy to determine their referents. But the poems' constant fascination with animals' sounds (*garjitam, ārava, dhvani*) suggest that they concern poets and their poetry, and especially the plight of the lone true poet (typically the lion) who is faced with lesser competitors (elephants) and with a crowd of nasty critics (jackals), the lowest creatures in the poetic food chain. If this interpretation is correct, it is easy to see why Bilhaṇa would be credited with these verses, even if he was not the one who composed them.

It is also not surprising that Bilhaṇa's preoccupation with the pettiness and niggardliness of kings did not abate in afterlife. There is another group of allegorical poems that the anthology compilers ascribe to Bilhaṇa and that concern the relationship between poets and patrons. These include, first, indirect complaints about patrons who are not sufficiently generous or whose benefaction is misguided. Here we hear of clouds that shower their rain not on parched trees but over the ocean, or of trees that fail to provide and are thus forever cursed by virtue of belonging in the same group as the famous wish-granting tree from heaven.[64] Or consider another poem ostensibly describing a tree:

> Some trees are so ungrateful
> that, desiring a better cover,
> they one by one discard the leaves
> that bore the brunt of frost.
> The trees care not that thus they lose their shade;
> nor that the leaves, more grateful,

60. Two examples are *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa 22.6 and *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 915; cf. Misra 1976, 86–89.

61. *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa 22.9; cf. *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 913. Misra 1976, 76, notes that the verse is ascribed either to Bilhaṇa or to Ralhaṇa.

62. *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa 22.8; *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 908; cf. Misra 1976, 88.

63. *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 924; cf. Misra 1976, 80.

64. *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 775 (for the first poem) and 988 (for the second). The second is ascribed to Ralhaṇa in Peterson's 1888 edition, but Aufrecht 1873, 119 mentions it as Bilhaṇa's (cf. Misra 1976, 95).

even in their dying
lie at their feet.[65]

As perhaps already hinted at by both Ingalls and Misra, what is unusual about this verse is that it goes one step beyond criticizing a tree for not providing travelers with fruit and shade, which would normally allude to a king/patron who fails to protect/reward his subjects/supplicants.[66] The emphasis here is, somewhat unusually, on the tree's ungratefulness toward its own leaves, which "bore the brunt of frost" and gave it its lush and beautiful look (*chāyā*, translated here as "shade," can also mean "beauty"). Is it possible to interpret this verse as a poet's complaint about the thanklessness of his patron whose naked form he covered with his luxurious words? If so, it would fit in with Bilhaṇa's notion of himself in the *VDC* as a jeweler who ornaments undeserving "berry-wearing forest dwellers."[67] Indeed, this interpretation gains credibility when we consider some additional verses that the anthologies ascribe to Bilhaṇa, verses that either allude to kings' ungratefulness and cruelty or describe Bilhaṇa's actual falling out with his employers.[68]

Of particular interest here is a verse that later tradition not only ascribed to Bilhaṇa but also believed to be an authentic record of his speech in real life:

Let the king of Kuntala take everything that's in my house!
Still, the treasure of Sarasvatī is every inch alive in my heart.

65. *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa 33.8. Cf. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* of Śrīdharadāsa, verse 1885, where the poem is ascribed to Acalasiṃha, and *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* of Vidyākara, verse 1042, where it is cited anonymously (see Misra 1976, 93–94). The translation here is by Ingalls 1965, 307–308, and hence I follow the reading of Vidyākara:

soḍha-prauḍha-hima-klamāni śanakaiḥ patrāṇy adhaḥ kurvate
saṃbhāvya-cchada-vāñchayaiva taravaḥ kecit kṛtaghna-vratāḥ /
nâmanyanta tadātanīm api nija-cchāyā-kṣatiṃ taiḥ punas
teṣām eva tale kṛtajña-caritaiḥ śuṣyadbhir apy āsyate //

66. Ingalls 1965, 302–303; Misra 1976, 94. For an example of such a verse, see *Kīcakavadha* of Nītivarman 3.2; cf. Bronner 2010, 64.

67. It is worth noting that a verse that one anthology cites as Bilhaṇa's closely echoes *VDC* 1.25, with its image of a jewelry designer for the forest tribal (cited in § 2 in this essay). This verse culminates with the question "What would a laundryman do in a village of naked mendicants?" (*nagna-kṣapaṇaka-grāme rajakaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati, Sūktiratnahāra* of Sūryakaliṅgarāja, 32.33; cf. Misra 1976.76).

68. In the former category I can mention yet another pair of allegorical verses, this time about deer. The first of these bitterly bemoans the fate of an innocent deer that, thinking that it is entering a safe haven, actually enters the slaughterhouse (*Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara 946). The second, which echoes a famous verse by Daṇḍin, speaks of the wisdom of forest deer: although they graze on simple grass, they are relieved of the need to pose as needy for the rich (*Padyaracanā* of Āṅkolakara Lakṣmaṇabhaṭṭa, p. 91; cf. *Kāvyādarśa* of Daṇḍin 2.339). See also Misra 1976, 72, 74.

Hey, good-for-nothings, cut the party out! Soon,
carried on the backs of elephants whose ears flutter in hauteur,
Lady Fortune will march right back into my home.[69]

Several distinctive features of Bilhaṇa's voice in the *VDC* are unmistakably audible in this verse. First, his utmost confidence in his poetry: the speaker knows that he has Sarasvatī inside him, safe beyond anybody's reach.[70] Second, his complete disdain for those around him, those "good-for-nothings." Third—and this, of course, is clearly related to the first two—the arrogance with which he assures his listeners of his recovery from what seems to be a shattering setback. Although he acknowledges that he has just lost all his worldly possessions, the speaker is certain that he will regain them "soon" (*acirāt*) and with great fanfare: Lady Fortune will return to his abode on the back of "elephants whose ears flutter in hauteur" (*helândolita-karṇa-tāla-karaṭi*; incidentally, elephants and their fluttering ears are a favorite topic in the *VDC*). But perhaps the most striking allusion to the *VDC* in this verse is the identity of the villain who has raided the speaker's home and confiscated his belongings: it is the "king of Kuntala," which is what Bilhaṇa often calls Vikrama in his poem.

Could Bilhaṇa have offended Vikrama with his pervasive snobbery and/or his autobiographical account, a separate poem on Kashmir and its kings that tops "Vikrama's" poem, and did Vikrama really strip him of all the gold he gave him, to the cheers of the courtiers?[71] Or does this verse better belong in Bilhaṇa's love episode? Some texts place it there, just at the point when Bilhaṇa is being dragged to the gallows for stealing the heart of the princess.[72] It is even possible to situate it in Bilhaṇa's tenure with King Karṇa of Gujarat, in whose court he wrote the *Karṇasundarī* before taking a job with Vikrama, but whom he conspicuously fails to mention in the résumé he provides in the *VDC*.[73] It is impossible to determine the authenticity of this verse, let alone its exact context.

69. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* of Śrīdharadāsa, verse 2150:
sarvasvaṃ gṛha-varti kuntala-patir gṛhṇātu tan me punar
bhāṇḍâgāram akhaṇḍam eva hṛdaye jāgarti sārasvatam /
re kṣudrās tyajata pramodam acirād eṣyanti man-mandiraṃ
helândolita-karṇatāla-karaṭi-skandhâdhirūḍhāḥ śriyaḥ //
The 1965 edition ascribes the verse to Silhaṇa, but as Misra 1976, 92–93 notes, the 1933 Punjab University edition (which I was unable to consult) has Bilhaṇa as the author.

70. Appropriately, this verse appears in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* in the section titled "The Pride of the Genius" (*guṇi-garva*).

71. As Krishnamachariar 1937, 165 believes.

72. As in the Kashmiri recension of the *Caurapañcāśikā* (see *Caurapañcāśikā* of Bilhaṇa, verse 1).

73. For Bilhaṇa's snubbing of Karṇa and his digs at Gujaratis, see Pathak 1966, 58 n. 20.

But this dilemma only serves to underscore the remarkable consistency typifying our poet's many lives. Thus I would like to conclude by arguing that the persona that tradition has imparted to Bilhaṇa and the poetry that this Bilhaṇa may have continued to compose posthumously should be seen as an act of recognition of his unique voice in the *VDC*. This is the voice of a writer who knows that he can fully count on Sarasvatī's favors, but who is never at peace with his predecessors, colleagues, critics, and employers, who resents the cultural space he embodies, and who feels constantly out of place. It is also the voice of a poet who is ever ambivalent about his political subject matter, is disgusted with kings and their public relations, and is often quite blunt and audacious about this. In discussing the portrayal of poets in Jain biographies and hagiographies (the earliest of which dates to the first part of the thirteenth century), Phyllis Granoff noted:

> The medieval poet was also a lone voice in a corrupt world. Seeking the favor of kings, he was nonetheless above the petty corruptions of the court and was often a reminder to a king of higher values in a world obsessed with power and self-aggrandizement. The medieval poet has an ambiguous relationship to his patron, and is superior to the king and his sycophantic courtiers. Wrongly accused, wrongly importuned, the medieval poet abandons an ignorant king without hesitation. In many cases the poet's disillusionment with the court becomes a general disgust with the world...[74]

Much more research is required if we are to historicize this attitude that Granoff so perceptively described, an attitude that is not found, to my knowledge, in any first-millennium source. But the unusual coherence between Bilhaṇa's *VDC* and his many afterlives, the insistence of later sources and anthology compilers on associating so many verses that embody this approach with Bilhaṇa (and not, as far as I can see, with any of his predecessors), and the sense that there is something radically fresh in this poet's personal presence as we find it in the *VDC* all suggest that it was he who inaugurated this new voice in *kāvya*.

Acknowledgments

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74. Granoff 1995, 354.

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18

Putting the Polish on the Poet's Efforts

Reading the Karṇasundarī *as a Reflection on Poetic Creativity**

PHYLLIS GRANOFF

A. The Play: Reading Beyond the Plot

It would be easy to dismiss Bilhaṇa's *Karṇasundarī* as a conventional Sanskrit drama with a familiar plot, telling of a lovelorn king's sometimes farcical efforts to attain the girl of his dreams and with her, the sovereignty of the world.[1] The play is said to have been performed on the occasion of a festival to the Jina Ṛṣabha at the temple of Śāntinātha in the city of Aṇahillapāṭana in Gujarat. The festival was sponsored by someone called Saṃpatkara, who is described as a minister to the Caulukyan king. This king has been identified with King Karṇa, the son of Bhīmadeva; he is also explicitly named as the hero of the play in verse ten, Act 1.[2] There is nothing at first sight particularly noteworthy

* While I take the metaphor of polishing from a verse in the play, I must acknowledge my debt to David Shulman in his essay on Murāri, delivered at the same conference at the Hebrew University in 2004 where I first delivered the present paper. David drew attention to the importance of this image. I have also been influenced in many ways by reading his essay, as will no doubt be clear in what follows.

1. The text is edited by Paṇḍti Durgāprasād and Kaśīnāth Pāṇḍurang Parab, Kāvyamālā 7, Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1932. Plays with similar plots include Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra* and Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī*, to name just two. The theme of the king winning the hand of a woman and thereby gaining overlordship of the entire world is a common one in Indian literature. See Porcher 1985, 183–206.

2. *Kiṃ caitat kila Bhīmadevatanayaḥ sākṣāt kathānāyakaḥ*. For more on this see the introduction to the text. At the conference K. Srinivasan reminded me that the marriage of King Karṇa is described as somewhat unusual in the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*

about the play. In the religious eclecticism of its day, it opens with a verse in praise of the Jina, which is followed by a verse in praise of Śiva and Pārvatī, and a verse in praise of Viṣṇu. Praise of both Śiva and Viṣṇu is not uncommon in literary works of the period, although a later commentator, perhaps from a more decidedly sectarian environment, could find this jarring. Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīya-carita*, for example, includes verses of praise to both gods. In Chapter 21, after Nala and Damayantī have been reunited, Nala goes to the temple to pray. He first worships a crystal image of Śiva (verses 34–40) and then begins a long hymn of praise to twelve incarnations of Viṣṇu (verses 41–110). The commentator, Nārāyaṇa, commenting on the first verse of the section on the incarnations of Viṣṇu, remarks that although Nala was a Śaiva, it was not inappropriate for him to worship Viṣṇu, since Śiva himself was a devotee of Viṣṇu. Thus the hymn to Viṣṇu was bound to please Śiva as well. He also suggests that since Śiva and Viṣṇu are one, singing the praises of Viṣṇu was tantamount to worshipping Śiva. He follows this by adding that Śrīharṣa was a great devotee of Viṣṇu, a *parama-vaiṣṇava*, and thus it was natural for him to compose this long hymn to Viṣṇu.[3] In fact, evidence that Śrīharṣa was a Vaiṣṇava is wanting; he himself tells us, for example, that he composed a text on Śiva and his Śakti, the *Śivaśaktisiddhi*.[4] What is clear, however, is that the commentator Nārāyaṇa was a *parama-vaiṣṇava* and found the verses in this chapter in praise of both gods somewhat awkward.[5]

Bilhaṇa's three opening verses would no doubt have troubled Nārāyaṇa even more. He opens his play with this verse in praise of the Jina, probably in deference to the fact that the play was performed on the occasion of a Jain festival:

> The heavenly damsels call out to him, "O noble one, it is not right for you to ignore us. Don't you see how we are wasting away with longing for you? What peace will you find if you have the murder of women

of Merutuṅga (p. 79 in the translation of C. H. Tawney, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1901). A different account is given by Hemacandra in his *Dvyāśrayakāvya* 9.74. Neither of these corresponds with the plot of the *Karṇasundarī*, which seems to follow a well-established pattern for dramas of this type.

3. *Naiṣadhīyacarita*: 898. *yadyapi nalaḥ śāiva iti prathā tathāpi śivasya viṣṇu-bhaktatvād viṣṇu-stutyāiva śivasya prīti-saṃbhavād āikarūpyāc ca nalasya viṣṇu-stuti-karaṇam/śrīharṣasya ca paramavāiṣṇavatvāt puruṣottama-stuti-nibandhanaṃ yuktam eveti na kācid anupapattiḥ.*

4. On Śrīharṣa's religious beliefs see Granoff 1978, 61–62, 251.

5. On the date of Nārāyaṇa as sometime before the seventeenth century, see the introduction to the translation of the *Naiṣadhacarita* by K. K. Handiqui, Poona: Deccan College, 1965.

on your conscience? Embrace us with your limbs of golden radiance."
May that Jina who resides on the mountain protect you. [6]

The basic plot of the drama is also perfectly in keeping with the standard dramatic fare of his day. Bilhaṇa has the *sūtradhāra* summarize it for us in this way (p. 3):[7]

> The king, a full moon to the ocean of the Caulukya lineage, having married the charming and alluring daughter of the king of Vidyādharas, who is a delight to the eyes, will attain universal sovereignty, celebrated on earth, heaven, and in the netherworld (I.13).

Even this summary statement of the plot in the first act of the play has its parallel elsewhere. For example, in Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī* 1.12, the audience is told:

> The king, the moon on earth of the Caṃḍvāla lineage, in order to obtain lordship over the world, in this play which drips with poetic sentiment, will marry the daughter of the king of Kuntala.[8]

The plot is filled with all sorts of coincidences and improbable occurrences, again typical of the genre. Early in the first act of the *Karṇasundarī*, we learn that the king has had a dream of a beautiful woman, and then, much to his surprise, sees the same girl falling from the sky.[9] The prime minister Praṇidhi tells us that

6. *arhan nârhasi mām upekṣitum api kṣāmām tvad-arthe tanuṃ*
kiṃ nâlokayase bhaviṣyati kutaḥ strī-ghātinas te sukham/
aṅgāiḥ kāñcana-kāntibhiḥ kuru pariṣvaṅgaṃ suparvaṅganâlokair
*ittham udīritaḥ kṣiti-dhara-sthāyī jinaḥ pātu vaḥ//*1.1

There is also a play on words in the last line, "the Jina, who is as firm and unmovable as a mountain."

7. *vidyādharendra-tanayāṃ nayanâbhirāmāṃ*
lāvaṇya-vibhrama-guṇāṃ pariṇīya devaḥ/
cālukya-pārthiva-kulârṇava-pūrṇa-candraḥ
*sāmrājyam atra bhuvana-traya-gītam eti/*1.13

8. *caṃḍavāladharaṇīhariṇaṅko cakkavaṭṭipaalāhaṇinittaṃ/*
ettha saṭṭaavare rasasotte karpūra-mañjarī pariṇei karpūra-mañjarī p. 5.

9. The convergence of dream image and reality may well owe its inspiration to the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* of Rājaśekhara. I have discussed this play as a philosophical meditation on the nature of reality at some length in my article, Granoff 2000, 63–107.

she is a Vidyādharī who has been cursed for passing over the Śiva *liṅga* that the king was worshipping (1.20):[10]

> Seeing these women whirling about in the sky, their hair stuck to their damp foreheads, wet with sweat from all their efforts, I think some Vidyādharī must have fallen after mistakenly passing over the *liṅga* when the lord of the Caulukyas was worshipping Tryambaka (I.20).

But also very early in the play the language with which the king describes this Vidyādharī suggests that there may be another level of meaning. Consider this verse I.26:[11]

> The moon, beloved of the Lady Night, is the canvas on which the creator painted her face. The stars are drops of divine nectar that fell from the tip of his brush. The autumn moonlight is what was left from the paint, the very essence of her womanly beauty. And the bow of the Mind-born one, the god of Love, was the measuring string to trace her eye-brows.

It is in a verse like this that I think we are challenged to go beyond the plot. It is clear from this verse that not only is the Vidyādharī the epitome of all created things; equally important is the emphasis on a process of creation that defies and exceeds any normal creation. Women's faces are often compared to the moon, but here the moon is the very canvas on which she was drawn, while the paint used to draw her is the very nectar of the gods; the stars are its splatters and the unused portion becomes the pure moonlight of autumn. The bow of the god of Love, to which a woman's eyebrows are regularly compared, becomes another tool for someone about to fashion something; it is the ruler used to measure out her eyebrows. The first word in the verse, *dhātus*, the creator, I think, shows us where the poet is placing his emphasis. I try to argue in this essay that these frequent references to the creative process and the creator are not incidental and that we can read the play on one level as a poet's meditation on the poet as creator and the poem as the ultimate creation.[12]

10. *etāḥ kāścana niścalālakalatāś cintātirekaśramasvidyadbhālalaṭā*
yadambaratale bhrāmyanti vāmabhruvaḥ/
śrī-cāulukya-kulodvahe kalayati tryakṣopacaryām iha
srastā kācana liṅga-laṅghana-vaśād vedmi vidyādharī// 1.20

11. *dhātus tan-mukha-vartanā-phalakaḥ śyāmā-vadhū-vallabhas*
tal-lekhodyata-tūlikâgra-galitās tārāḥ sudhā-vipruṣaḥ.
tal-lāvaṇya-rasasya śeṣam amalā sā śāradī kāumudī
tad-bhrū-nirmiti-māna-sūtram api tac-cāpaṃ manojanmanaḥ// 1.26

12. Lawrence McCrea suggested that a hint of this may also be found in the very name of the Vidyādharī, "Karṇasundarī," "Delightful to the Ear." Of course the name also means the beloved of Karṇa, the hero of the play.

In this and other verses that I examine later, we see the poet taking pains to distinguish his own creative efforts from those of the ordinary creator god. For it is only the poet who is so untrammeled in his creating that he can violate or ignore the normal order of things; he can paint a woman with the moon as his canvas or scatter his paint to make the stars. The ordinary creator, the one who makes the mundane world, is by contrast hampered by laws of nature, by karma, and by the physical elements that obey their own laws. In fact, complete freedom in creation was often part of the definition of poetry. Consider this definition, for example, from Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*: [13]

> Great is the language of poets, which fashions its own creation of pure bliss, free from any governing constraints, subservient to none, with ever new pleasures.

The same idea is echoed by Abhinavagupta in his *Locana* on the *Dhvanyāloka*; both poet and connoisseur create a world that is entirely unprecedented, and they do so without the usual causes (karma, atoms, and so on). Both poet and connoisseur make the world, which is like a stone, flow with *rasa*.[14] Rājaśekhara in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* described the creation of poetry in these words:[15]

> The Earth is covered by the ocean; the ocean, source of waters, is a hundred *yojana* in dimensions; the travelling sun takes the measure of the sky. In general all things are constrained by clearly imposed limits. Only the creative wisdom of the great poets knows no such restraints.

Later in the *Bālarāmayaṇa*, as Rāvaṇa is himself about to watch a new play about Sītā's *svayaṃvara*, he is at first outraged by the very idea that Sītā should be choosing anyone else when he is there for the taking, but then he reminds himself, *niraṅkuśāḥ kavivācaḥ*, "Poets are free to say whatever they want."[16]

13. *Niyati-kṛta-niyama-rahitāṃ hlādikamayīm ananya-paratantrāṃ*
nava-rasa-rucirāṃ nirmitim ādadhatī bhāratī kaver jayati.
14. *Dhvanyāloka* p.1:
apūrvaṃ yad-vastu prathayati vinā kāraṇa-kalāṃ
jagad-grāva-prakhyaṃ nija-rasa-bharāt sārayati ca /
kramāt prakhyopākhyā-prasara-subhagaṃ bhāsayati tat
sarasvatyās tattvaṃ kavi-suhṛdayākhyaṃ vijayate//
15. *Bālarāmāyaṇaṃ*, ed. Govindadevaśāstrī.
udanvac-channā bhūḥ sa ca nidhir apāṃ yojana-śatam
sadā pānthaḥ pūṣā gagana-parimāṇaṃ gaṇayati/
iti prāyo bhāvāḥ sphurad-avadhi-mudrā-mukulitāḥ
*satām prajñonmeṣaḥ punar ayam asīmā vijayate//*1.8
16. *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, p. 59.

By the time of Udayana, and perhaps influenced by such theories of poetic creation, even philosophers would play with the notion of a god who creates a world that is always new and always astonishing, closer to the poet, in fact than the normal creator god of Indian religious texts. Otherwise, Mammaṭa's distinction was by and large accepted: it was only the poet who had total freedom in his creating.[17] The understanding of poetry as the product of a process that by definition ignored natural law has several implications. Poetry is by definition not "realistic"; the characters in a drama, in so far as they are poetic creations, defy normal expectations. This distinguishes poetry clearly from another art form that also figures importantly in classical Sanskrit drama: painting, and incidentally sculpture.[18] Paintings are singled out for their verisimilitude; indeed characters in a play often have trouble distinguishing a painted portrait from its living subject. That the same emphasis on fidelity to reality was praised in three-dimensional created objects is also clear from references to sculptures in drama.

We may gain further insight into the unique nature of poetic creativity from a consideration of an entirely different type of man-made entity, the mechanical contrivances or *yantra*s that seem to have been popular in royal courts around the same time that Bilhaṇa was writing. Consider the following definition of *yantra*s that was given by King Bhoja in his *Samaraṅgaṇasūtradhāra*:[19]

> A *yantra* is a device that controls the elements of the world, which are all functioning willy-nilly, in their own ways, and makes them function there each according to its own proper way.

The next verse, which gives an alternate definition, stresses that a *yantra* is a device in which the artist keeps the untrammeled elements at bay and makes

17. *kāraṃ kāraṃ alaukikâdbhutamayaṃ māyā-vaśāt samharan/*
hāraṃ hāraṃ apîndra-jālam iva yaḥ kurvan jagat krīḍati
taṃ devaṃ niravagraha-sphurad-abhidhyānânubhāvaṃ bhavam
viśvāśaika-bhuvaṃ śivaṃ prati naman bhyāsām anteṣvapi// Kusumāñjali 2.4

18. During our discussions Narayana Rao suggested that this needs to be further qualified; as the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* itself makes clear, the audience of the drama takes the play for reality. Nonetheless, I would maintain that there is a general distinction made between all the other arts and pure poetry: pure poetry operates on a different level than painting, sculpture, or an ordinary drama, all of which seduce the observer into thinking they are not mere representations, but that which is represented itself.

19. *yad-ṛcchayā parvṛttāni bhūtāni svena vartmanā /*
niyamyâsmin nayati yat tad yantram iti kīrtitam //31.3

And the next verse:

sva-rasena pravṛttāni bhūtāni sva-manīṣayā /
kṛtaṃ yasmād yamayati tadvā yantram iti smṛtam //31.4

I have discussed some of this material in Granoff 2004.

them function as he desires. Both these definitions assume a natural world without law, rather gone amuck; the task of the artist is to provide order. The created object is a kind of hyper-real object; this is also clear from the description of *yantras* in literature. The most famous *yantra* in medieval literature is the shower house of the king, where birds and women made of jewels seem even more real than their real counterparts so real that even artificial animals are duped by them![20] As we shall see, the creation of the poet is not a hyper-reality, but an alternate and aesthetically preferable reality.

The description of the artist who makes a *yantra* and his relationship to the world is thus almost diametrically opposed to the poet's vision of his art. The creator of the *yantra* brings order into a chaotic natural world, while to the poet the natural world is rule-bound and uninteresting. The world that the poet creates is startlingly fresh and exciting. These sharply contrasting understandings of the relationship of art to the natural world, of the artist to god, suggest that there was a lively debate in medieval India on these issues. I suspect that we have often missed much of it because of where it occurred. We know much about the poet's understanding of his art from treatises on poetry, but far less about the general context in which it developed, speculation on creation in general and on artistic creation as a whole. I have tried to show elsewhere that it was within one particular genre of poetry, the classical drama, that many of these questions were in fact raised.[21]

In what follows I attempt to demonstrate that Bilhaṇa in his *Karṇasundarī* has much to tell us about the unique nature of the poet as creator; he does this not only in explicit statements about poets, but also in verses where he talks of the creator god *dhātṛ*, and his one very special creation, the heroine of the play *Karṇasundarī*. We shall see that Bilhaṇa describes both the poet and Karṇasundarī's maker in the same mutually allusive language, transforming a familiar motif in the Sanskrit drama, praise of the unique beauty of the heroine, to allow himself to comment at the same time on the nature of poets and poetry. This becomes clear, I think, as the play progresses.[22] But first I return to the plot, highlighting in the process themes to which I will return.

20. Bhoja also provides some of the most elaborate descriptions of the shower house. See Granoff 2004, cited above.

21. See Granoff 2000.

22. Compare for example Kālidāsa in *Śakuntala* Act 2:

anāghrātaṃ puṣpaṃ kisalayam alūnaṃ kara-ruhair
anāviddhaṃ ratnaṃ madhu navam anāsvādita-rasam/
akhaṇḍaṃ puṇyānāṃ phalam iva tad-rūpam anagham
na jāne bhoktāraṃ kam iha samupasthāsyati vidhiḥ// 10

As the plot unfolds, the queen discovers that the king is in love with Karṇasundarī, the Vidyādharī, and is furious at him. She overhears him talking in his sleep. The king is dreaming of Karṇasundarī, whom he sees in a garden. She is about to commit suicide and the king desperately tries to stop her, uttering words that praise her beauty. But she eludes him, and he wakes up. As the king explains to the Vidūṣaka I.39:[23]

> "'Stop lovely lady. Why do you want to kill yourself?
> You are the very life breath of the God of Love.' No sooner had
> I said this to the moon-faced lady and taken hold of her shawl,
> than with a rustle of her girdle she disappeared into thin air."

But the queen has heard the king in his sleep and is suspicious. We shall see that she is not to be easily won over. The Vidūṣaka suggests that the king need not worry. The king can throw himself at the queen's feet and murmur sweet nothings to conciliate her; in any case, experience has shown that it is always the Vidūṣaka who is blamed for everything that goes wrong. The king is not convinced and replies in this telling verse (I.41):[24]

> "Though my offense was slight, my efforts to appease her anger were
> all for naught. Indeed, they only made the lovely-eyed lady suspect my
> love for her even more. And now my mind, empty of all other
> thoughts, trembles in fear that love, like a thief, will steal in. I've no
> idea what script the creator will now write for me."

The king is speaking:

"Her beauty is a flower whose fragrance no one has ever smelled; it is a new sprout, never broken by anyone's nails; it is a jewel, never pierced to string on a necklace; it is a new kind of honey, whose flavor has never been tasted before. Indeed, her faultless beauty is the unbroken fruit of many meritorious deeds. I've no idea whom the creator will choose as the one to enjoy her beauty."

It is certainly possible that Kālidāsa also alludes here to poetry and its poetic creativity; it is also possible that Bilhaṇa in his verses on creation is following earlier practice. Nonetheless, I would argue that what he does with these conventional verses is different, developing them into a more sustained engagement with the nature of poetry.

23. *virama rama prāṇa-tyāge dhṛtā kim-iti spṛhā*
nanu bhagavataḥ kaṃdarpasya tvam ucchvasitântaram/
iti śaśi-mukhīm uktvā yāvad bibharmi paṭāñcale
caṭula-raśānā tūrṇam tāvad gatā kvacid eva sā// 1.39

24. *na yasmin dākṣinyaṃ pariṇatam iyattvasya viṣaye*
vikalpâdhiṣṭhānaṃ tad api vihitaṃ prema sudṛśaḥ. /
itaḥ śūnyaṃ cetaḥ smara-kitava-saṃcāra-cakitaṃ
na jānīmo dhātuḥ kim-adhikaraṇaḥ sūtraṇa-vidhiḥ// 1.41

The surface meaning of the verse is clear: the queen has rejected the king's attempts at reconciliation and the king is despondent. The poet plays on the idiom used to express mental distress; the mind or heart is said to be *śūnya*, or empty, when a person is miserable. But this is not the king's only worry; thieves love empty houses, and so the king fears that love, like a thief, will rob his heart. He now has two problems: his wife is angry with him and won't be mollified, and he is afraid that he is falling in love. But I would like to concentrate on the last line. The king wonders what the script the creator, *dhātṛ*, will write for him. But it is, of course, the poet Bilhaṇa, who is writing this script. And if the king wonders what script the creator god is writing for him, the audience of the play is surely wondering what script the author of the play is writing for them. If we put this verse together with I.26 on the creation of the Vidyādharī, discussed earlier, we can guess that it will be something out of the ordinary. I would like to suggest that in these verses with their references to the creator, *dhātṛ*, the poet keenly makes us aware of his presence: he is in fact the *dhātṛ* here, the one who writes the script, the one whose words create the Vidyādharī Karṇasundarī, a being as unprecedented in the world as a good poem is supposed to be.[25]

Bilhaṇa, here as elsewhere, may well be taking a clue from Rājaśekhara in his *Bālarāmāyaṇa* 6.15. Rājaśekhara attempted to remove from Daśaratha and Kaikeyī the moral opprobrium that was associated with the exile of Rāma. He does this by having the demon Māyāmaya disguise himself as Daśaratha, while Śurpaṇakhā is disguised as Kaikeyī. It is the demonness as Kaikeyī who asks for the boon of Rāma's exile, and the demon disguised as Daśaratha who grants it. When the real Daśaratha returns to Ayodhyā and learns what has happened, he expresses his distress in a verse that plays on the pregnant meanings of *kavi* as both creator god and poet. Here is what Daśaratha says:[26]

> Mine shall be the ignominy of being an aged king, subject to the whims of his wife; the daughter of Kekeya is forever sullied, as she takes her place among the most wicked of the wicked. Even Bharata does not escape being tainted, for everyone will think that he was a party to it all. I cannot imagine who was the poet (creator) of this work, in which the family of the Raghus is so stained.

In this verse the poet writing the poem in which all of this happens is also the creator who makes the events transpire. Bilhaṇa, as he equates author and

25. I have taken the word *sūtraṇa* to mean "write."

26. *narendro vṛddhaḥ strī-vaśa iti mayi nyastam ayaśo*
niṣaṇṇā daurātmyeṣv iti malinitā kekeya-sutā/
mataṃ tasyâpy asminn iti ca bharate lakṣma likhitaṃ
na jāne ko 'smin, raghu-kula-kalaṅke kavir abhūt // 15

creator in the verse of the *Karṇasundarī* quoted earlier, may well be following the lead of Rājaśekhara.

The script that Bilhaṇa writes next involves a series of comic episodes during which the queen tries to foil the king's desire to have Karṇasundarī, and the king and the Vidūṣaka try to thwart the queen's machinations. At one point, in Act III, the queen learns that the king has made a secret tryst with Karṇasundarī in the garden. The queen dresses herself up as Karṇasundarī, but the king discovers the trick as soon as he embraces her. Finally, the queen plans to take her revenge on the king by dressing up her nephew as the king's beloved and having the king marry him/her. The king and the Vidūṣaka divine her plot and substitute the real Karṇasundarī, to whom the king is at last married. At the moment of their marriage, a messenger comes telling the king that his armies have conquered his remaining enemies. The prophecy is fulfilled: the king marries the Vidyādhara princess and becomes emperor over the whole world. The poem concludes with a telling verse, though, that compels us to return to the earlier verses about poetic creativity. Where one would expect that the play should end with a benediction for the king, a wish for his long life and prosperous rule, and perhaps a wish that the poet's words endure, this king asks for something else:[27]

> Let me have by my side a skillful poet, who has studied all of the branches of knowledge with ease; who is skilled in playfully churning up the waters of the ocean of literature; who is the beloved of ornate speech, who composes a great poem or its equal every day; who is known for his unwavering eloquence and has well-conceived designs.

We might compare this with the more typical verse at the end of the *Karpūramañjarī* as an example:[28]

> May the raging fire of poverty, which blazes forth every day, destroying all the virtues of the wise, be quenched by the rain that pours from the kindly glances of the goddess of Fortune.

27. *helâbhyasta-śāstra-gahanaḥ sāhitya-pāthonidhi-*
krīḍā-loḍana-paṇḍitaḥ priyatamaḥ śṛṅgāriṇīnāṃ girām/
ekaikena dinena nirmita-mahā-kāvyâdir avyāhata-
prāgalbhya-sthiti-viśrutaḥ sthiramatiḥ pārśve vidagdhaḥ kaviḥ//4.24

28. *aṇudiahaṃ viphuraṃo maṇīsijaṇasaalaguṇaviṇāsaaro/*
rittattaṇadāvaggī viramau kamalākaḍakkhavariseṇa. 4.24

The *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* does end with a verse praying that the poetry of good poets, sweet to the ears, last forever. I have argued elsewhere that the penultimate line in this closing benediction tells us that the play has another meaning beyond the surface plot (see Granoff 2000). Rājaśekhara

This comparison with the more conventional closing verse of the *Karpūramañjarī* makes Bilhaṇa's ending, a wish for the presence of a poet at court, seem all the more unusual.[29] The play seems to have come full circle. It had opened with verses on poetry and ends with a plea that there always be a skilled poet at court. It is instructive to consider one of the opening verses on poetry here, because it suggests that Bilhaṇa meant his play to be received by its audience in different ways: as a drama to be seen, and as poetry to be read: I.11.[30]

> "This makes the composition seem right, but the poetic flavor needs something more to reach its peak; this shows off learning, but this is the soul of poetry." The connoisseur, mulling over the poems in books, understands such struggles of the poet, and bursting with appreciation, polishes them with his flowing tears of joy.

ends the *Bālarāmāyāṇa* with a wish that good poets go on composing verses and knowledgeable readers ponder their meaning (10.105). In the final act of the play, Rājaśekhara has much to say about poetry, language, and their regional flavor. Nonetheless, I would argue that unlike either the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* or the *Karṇasundarī*, with their more carefully sustained probings into poetry and reality, the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* does not tie together its scattered remarks.

29. In his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, Bilhaṇa also stressed the importance of poets to kings:

> *laṅkā-pateḥ saṅkucitaṃ yaśo yad yat kīrti-pātraṃ raghu-rāja-putraḥ*
> *sa sa evâdi-kaveḥ prabhāvo na kopanīyāḥ kavayaḥ kṣitîndraiḥ*// 1.27

"That the king of Laṅkā has scant fame while the son of the Raghu lineage has great fame is all due to the power of the first poet. Kings would do well to take care not to offend poets".

30. *aucityā-vaham etad atra tu rasaḥ kāṣṭhām anenârhati*
> *vyutpatter idam āspadam padam idaṃ kāvyasya jīvātave.*
> *evaṃ yaḥ kavituḥ śramaḥ sahṛdayas taṃ pustakebhyaḥ paṭhan*
> *sūktīr utpulakaḥ pramārṣṭi nibiḍair ānanda-bāṣpodgamaiḥ*.1.11

This verse should be compared with the concluding verse of Rājaśekhara's *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, 10.105:

> *samyak-saṃsāra-vidyā-viṣadam upaniṣad-bhūtam arthâdbhūtānām*
> *grathantu granthi-bandhaṃ vacanaṃ anupatat-sūkti-muktāḥ suyuktāḥ/*
> *santaḥ saṃtarpitântaḥkaraṇam anuguṇam brahmaṇaḥ kāvya-mūrteḥ*
> *tat-tattvaṃ sātvikaiś ca prathama-piśunitaṃ bhāvayanto 'rcayantu*//105

"May hard-working poets, scattering fine phrases like so many pearls, compose their poems, words carefully strung together, with the occasional knot that needs to be untied; poems that sparkle with knowledge of this world and are secret repositories of things wondrous and unprecedented. And may such poets have the learned readers they deserve, who deeply satisfied, ponder their meaning that can only be hinted at by their first reactions. Such readers do honor to a poem by understanding it in a way that preserves the divine essence that is poetry." We are reminded here of Śrīharṣa refrain in the *Naiṣadhīya* that he has put knots here and there in his poem.

The presence of a few verses on poets and poetry at the opening of a play is standard, but by also concluding the play with the king's unusual wish for a poet to be beside him, Bilhaṇa seems to signal that the poet has a special role to play not only in the king's court, but also in his play. I think it makes us reconsider the opening verses as more than conventional verses.[31] Framed, then, as it is between these two meditations on the poet and his craft, the verses at the start of the play, and the concluding homage to the poet, the play itself, it seems to me, demands to be read as part of that process of polishing, of understanding the essence of poetic creation. In what follows, I will try to do just that. I would add that it is worth remarking on the fact that Bilhaṇa says here that a poem must be read in a book in order to be properly appreciated. Here, as in other points in the play, he may well be echoing Rājaśekhara, who in the *Bālarāmayaṇa* had said that good poetry should be read and studied, while hackneyed verse can survive by being bandied about by actors on the stage.[32] There are in fact indications that around Bilhaṇa's time verses from a play, excerpted from the context provided by the prose dialogue passages, circulated independently as basically purely poetic compositions. The Jain monk-poet Rāmacandra, who was active in Aṇahillapatan at the same time as Bilhaṇa, wrote a number of plays. He also wrote some *uddhāra*s, or "excerpts," which are essentially the verses of the play without the dialogue. Reading the *uddhāra* side by side with the play of the same name makes it immediately clear that the *uddhāra* was meant to be read. It would not have made sense as a performance. Characters in the *uddhāra* suddenly appear without warning; lines must often be added to supply context that would have been there in the play from the prose dialogues.[33] Bilhaṇa thus belongs to a milieu in which plays were also meant to be read as poems, and it is thus not unnatural that he should have used this medium to explore among other things, the nature of poetic creation. How he does this is the subject of the rest of this essay.

31. The *Karpūramañjarī* in fact contains an extended discussion on what constitutes a good poem in its first act, most notably in the hilarious quarrel between the maid servant and the Vidūṣaka, pp. 8–11.

32. *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, p. 8:

praṣṭavyo 'sau paṭīyān iha bhaṇiti-guṇo vidyate vā na veti /
yadyasti svasti tubhyaṃ bhava paṭhana-rucir viddhi naḥ ṣaṭ prabandhān
naivaṃ ced dīrgham āstām naṭa-baṭu-vadane jarjarā kāvya-kanyā//1.12.

33. On this poet and his works see the introduction to the *Raghuvilasanāṭaka, of* Mahākavi Śrī Rāmacnadra. The *Raghuvilāśanāṭakoddhāra* is Vol. 76 and by the same author. See also the *Satyahariścandranāṭakam* of Ramacandra and *Kaumudīmitrāṇandarūpakam*.

B. Creating the New and Improbable: The Poet's Task in the *Karṇasundarī*

We have seen how a verse at the beginning of the play and the concluding verse reflect the poet's concern with poetry and poets. These are not the only explicit verses that deal with poets and poetry. I would like to begin with a consideration of some of the verses of the *praśasti*, which follows the play and in which the poet speaks of himself. Bilhaṇa's *praśasti* is somewhat unusual in its exclusive focus on the poet and his craft. In these verses Bilhaṇa says nothing of his family lineage or place of birth, common topics for a *praśasti*; he does not even mention his human teacher. Instead, he emphasizes the uniqueness of his poetic gifts and their divine source. In the first verse he describes himself as the one:

> To whom the goddess who occupies half the body of the moon-crested one taught knowledge of the ultimate sound, along with all of its secrets, when he was still a mere child.[34]

This verse is paralleled by a verse at the beginning of the play, in which the *sūtradhāra* describes the play as the work of the poet Bilhaṇa, who was favored by the goddess who was the wife of the destroyer of the Three Cities, who made him the receptacle of inspired speech.[35]

In the next verse in the *praśasti*, Bilhaṇa describes himself as the very incarnation of poetry, in an image that may well echo a verse by the poet Murāri, who seems to have set a new standard against which later poets were forced to measure themselves.[36] Murāri in his *Anargharāghava* I.10 had compared the sage

34. *ardha-candra-māuler viracita-vasatir devatā sâpi yasmāi*
śabda-brahmâbhyanujñāṃ samam upaniṣadā bālya evâdideśa

Poetic gift is commonly spoken of as a gift of a goddess, usually the goddess Sarasvatī. On this see Granoff 1995, 351–77.

35. *haṃho bhāgya-mahā-nidhir dayitayā devasya dagdhuḥ purāṃ*
putra iva svayaṃ viracitaḥ sārasvatīnāṃ girām. 1.10

36. On Murāri's use of this image see David Shulman, "Murāri's Depths." One of Bilhaṇa's contemporaries, the Jain monk Rāmacandra had this to say about Murāri:

"There have been many important poets, like Murāri, for example, who were keen on composing works which were pleasing because of their many clever novel ways of saying things, but to us it seems that only Rāma was able to elevate poetic sentiment, the true soul of drama, to its highest peak."

Kaumudīmitrāṇandarūpakaṃ, p. 2:
prabandhān ādhatuṃ nava-bhaṇiti-vaidagdhya-madhurān
kavîndrā nistandrāḥ kati nahi murāri-prabhṛtayaḥ
ṛte rāmān nânyaḥ kimuta para-koṭāu ghaṭayituṃ
rasān nāṭya-prāṇān paṭur iti vitarko manasi naḥ// 1.3

Vālmīki to a tree on which poetic speech rests as it falls from heaven. Bilhaṇa arrogates that role to himself, and perhaps in a subtle dig at Murāri, adds that his flowering was *nirvyājaṃ*, "Not dependent on tricks," a phrase I have translated by the weak, "simply."[37]

> The wishing tree Śrībilhaṇa has simply burst into bloom with glorious flowers. Standing on the path of the words of Kālidāsa, its root is the compassionate blessed sage who was born from an anthill (Vālmīki); many other poets, like the son of Parāśara, have helped to make it strong.[38]

In the final verse of the *praśasti*, Bilhaṇa returns to the idea that poetic inspiration has a divine source. The poet declares that fine poetry and saffron must be related, for neither occurs apart from *śāradādeśam*.[39] In the case of fine poetry it means the command of the goddess Śāradā, the form of Sarasvatī worshipped in Kashmir; in the case of saffron it means simply the land of Kashmir.

From these verses we see that Bilhaṇa clearly has a high regard for poets, whose inspiration is divine, and for himself as a poet. In its emphasis on poetry, the poet, and poetic inspiration rather than on family or educational lineage,

37. *yan-mūlaṃ karuṇā-nidhiḥ sa bhagavān valmīka-janmā munir*
yasyāike kavayaḥ parāśara-suta-prāyāḥ pratiṣṭhāṃ dadhuḥ/
sadyo yaḥ pathi kālidāsa-vacasāṃ śrībilhaṇaḥ so 'dhunā
nirvyājaṃ phalitaḥ sahāiva kusumottaṃsena kalpa-drumaḥ//2

Anxiety over the poet's relationship to Vālmīki, who was considered the first poet, the *ādikavi*, is at the center of discussions on poetic creativity. Thus in the *Dhvanyāloka*, Ānandavardhana argues that the subjects of poetry by their very nature must be infinite; otherwise, there would have been just one poet in the world, the first poet Vālmiki, who would have left nothing for those who came after him. *Dhvanyāloka*, p. 591, discussion on 4.6.

38. To praise a particular poet as the root of the tree or creeper of poetry in fact seems to have been a common image in the period. Padmagupta (c. 1005 AD) makes no mention of Murāri, but praised Vākpatirāja as the root of the wishing-granting creeper that is the goddess of Speech, Sarasvatī:

sarasvatī-kalpa-lataika-kandaṃ vandāmahe vākpatirāja-devam/
yasya prasādād vayam apy ananya-kavîndra-cīrṇe pathe saṃcarāmaḥ

"We praise the King of Poets, Vākpatirāja, the root of the wishing-granting creeper, the goddess Sarasvatī, thanks to whom we too now tread a path never trodden before by other poets." *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*, 1.7.

39. *sahodarāḥ kuṅkuma-kesarāṇāṃ bhavanti nūnaṃ kavitā-vilāsāḥ*
na śāradādeśam apāsya dṛṣtas teṣāṃ yad-anyatra mayā prarohaḥ//4

"Clearly poetic fancy and saffron must be closely related, for they share the same origin, the one in the command of the goddess Śāradā (*śāradā-ādeśa*) and the other in Kashmir, the land of the goddess Śāradā."

I would argue that the *praśasti* mirrors the central theme of the play. I would now like to look at some more verses in the *Karṇasundarī* to see further how Bilhaṇa used his play as a means of conveying some of these ideas about poetry.

We have already seen that Bilhaṇa speaks about poetry both directly and indirectly. The verses in the *praśasti* belong clearly to his direct statements; the verses on Karṇasundarī, I would argue, are his indirect reflections on poetry. I return now to another one of these verses, I. 31.[40] The king has seen the Vidyādhara princess and marvels at her beauty:

> Have I dreamt this fawn-eyed lady with a body so lovely that beauty
> ripples through it in enticing waves? Or was it all a conjurer's trick
> or a supernatural display? Surely her form is something entirely new,
> fashioned by some creator who has an excellent design in mind;
> for in it there is not even a wisp of similarity to the lotus, the moon,
> moonlight, or a lotus fiber.

On first reading, this seems to be a conventional verse, examples of which abound in Sanskrit dramatic literature; the king praises Karṇasundarī by denying that she is similar to the standard objects with which beautiful women are normally compared by poets. But I think that if we read the verse as subtly allusive to other verses in the play, we can strengthen our hypothesis that Bilhaṇa is using poetic convention to talk about poetry as well as female beauty. Bilhaṇa suggests that Karṇasundarī has another creator, someone who is *sumati*, "knowing," or "has excellent ideas." He also calls the creation an *ullekha*. This is a more difficult word to pin down; it can mean a painting, a carving, or something ground down or polished.[41] It can also mean the scratch that a gem or gold makes on a touchstone. Bilhaṇa himself gives us a clue as to which meaning is appropriate here and indeed just what this creation is. He uses the word *ullekha* directly with reference to poetry in another of the verses in his *praśasti* (verse 3). There he praises poets' "*girām ullekhā*," the "*ullekhas*" of words. These *ullekhas* are further described as "*grantha-sahasra-śāṇa-kaṣaṇa-truṭyat-kalaṅka*," "Perfected by being rubbed on the grinding stone of thousands of texts." In this image, poetic speech is likened to a gemstone that has been ground to perfection, its flaws removed, by the study of the works of previous poets. It is clear that when he speaks

40. *svapno 'sau kim utendra-jālam aparaṃ kiṃ vā kim apy adbhutam*
yat sā kānti-taraṅgitâṅga-latikā dṛṣṭā kuraṅgekṣaṇā
ullekhaḥ sa navīna eva sumateḥ kasyâpi rūpe vidheḥ
saṃvādo 'pi na yasya paṅkaja-śaśi-jyotsnā-mṛṇālâdibhiḥ//1.31

41. Narayana Rao also suggested that it can mean something written, a meaning that would be particularly appropriate here.

here of poetry, *ullekha* is something that has been ground down or polished to perfection. Bilhaṇa thus speaks of the creation of Karṇasundarī in 1.31 in the very same language with which he speaks later of the creation of poetry.[42]

Rājaśekhara, who influenced Bilhaṇa in so many ways, often uses the term *ullekha* to refer to an excellence in poetic speech.[43] He rejects the notion that repeating more than three words from another poet's work is by definition plagiarism. To be classified as plagiarism, he says, the words that are borrowed must be "*ullekhavān*," that is, they must have some special quality that distinguishes them as uniquely poetic. In the verse that concludes his discussion on plagiarizing the words of another poet, Rājaśekhara also describes the great poet as one who finds some new words, new ideas, and new phrases to "polish" or refine the old. He uses the verb "*ullikhet*" to describe what the great poet does to earlier works.[44]

42. In another of his poems, the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, Bilhaṇa similarly refers to the words of poets as jewels which are turned into *ullekha*s by connoisseurs like the jewelers who use their discrimination as a grinding stone.

ullekha-līlā-ghaṭanā-paṭūnāṃ sacetasāṃ vaikaṭikopamānām/
*vicāra-śāṇopala-paṭṭikāsu mat-sūkti-ratnāny atitħī-bhavantu//*19

"May the cognoscenti apply the jewels of my speech to the grinding stone of their intellects, like jewelers skilled in the art of making finished stones."

In Verse 24, *ullekha* is more clearly the mark left by gold when rubbed against a touchstone:

alaukikollekha-samarpaṇena vidagdha-cetaḥ-kaṣa-paṭṭikāsu/
*parikṣitaṃ kāvya-suvarṇam etal lokasya kaṇṭhâbharaṇatvam etu//*24

"May my poem, like gold, having left its extraordinary mark on the touchstone of the mind of the knowing, become fit to adorn the throats of all."

43. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, p. 58. See the comments of the translators in note 29, p. 167, *La Kāvyamīmāmsā de Rājaśekhara*. The translators note that *ullekha* is the name of an *alaṅkāra* in later texts like the *Sāhityadarpana* and the *Kuvalyānanda*. That meaning does not seem to apply here.

44. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, p. 62:

śabdârthoktiṣu yaḥ paśyed iha kiñcana nūtanam
ullikhet kiñcana prācyaṃ manyatāṃ sa mahā-kaviḥ

Compare also the verse in Chapter 12, p. 64, where he defines the poet called *karṣaka:*

para-vākyârtham ākṛṣya yaḥ sva-vāci niveśayet.
samullekhena kenâpi sa smṛtaḥ karṣakaḥ kaviḥ.

"The poet who extracts the meaning of another poet's work and puts it into his own composition, putting his own stamp on it, is called the "*karṣaka.*" The French translators offer the following translation but note that the word *samullekha* is not attested in the sense in which they are using it: "La poéte qui attirant à lui l'idée qu'exprime autrui, l'introduit dans son proper discours à la faveur de quelque citation est 'celui qui attire' (p. 182)." I would emphasize here that Rājaśekhara classifies poets with a classification taken from alchemy for certain types of metals. In one classification of iron there are four types, *romaka, bhrāmaka, cumbaka*, and *drāvaka*. The *Rasārṇava* adds *karṣaka*. Rājaśekhara classifies poets as *bhrāmaka, cumbaka, drāvaka* and, *karṣaka*. See Meulenbeld 1999, 282. See also Granoff (2009).

The term does not seem to have originated with Rājaśekhara; in his discussion on permitted types of borrowing in the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* he quotes one Surānanda as saying, "This practice, which is inspired, (*ullekhavān*) is to be followed." He also quotes the following verse of Surānanda:

> Glory to the Goddess Sarasvatī, who is to poets like the blessing of the Holy Writ. For the Goddess Sarasvatī can turn any subject from an ordinary gemstone into something of incalculable value by polishing it in her own special way.[45]

Returning to Bilhaṇa, there is another echo in our verse 1.31 to Bilhaṇa's direct statements on poetry. In the final verse of the play, translated earlier, in which Bilhaṇa has the king ask to have a poet by his side, the term *sthira-mati* is used to describe the poet. I translated the term as "has well-conceived designs"; I see it as clearly related to the term *sumati* used to describe the creator in verse 1.31 on Karṇasundarī which I am now discussing. In this verse I translated the word as "has an excellent design in mind." I would like to argue that the parallels in language between the verse on Karṇasundarī here and the verses on poets at the end of the play are a clear clue to us that Bilhaṇa is really talking about poetry in this play, even when he seems to be talking about something else.

What is unique about the creation of Karṇasundarī is also what is unique about poetic creation: both processes create objects that are entirely different from the ordinary objects of the world; both require a creator who "polishes" or perfects his creation, and who creates purely from a mental design. The poet and the creator of Karṇasundarī do not use the ordinary tools of creation: neither uses the physical objects of the world, for example. If the creator of Karṇasundarī had used the physical objects of the world, we might have expected her to have looked like some of them, the moon, perhaps, or the lotus. Karṇasundarī's creation is exceptional in exactly the same ways in which the creation of a poem is exceptional. Indeed, Karṇasundarī is Bilhaṇa's perfect poem.

45. *so 'yam ullekhavān anugrāḥyo mārgaḥ iti surānandaḥ*
tad āha
sarasvatī sā jayati prakāmaṃ
devī śrutiḥ svastyayanaṃ kavīnām/
anarghatām ānayati svabhaṅgyā
yollikhya yatkiñcid ihârtha-ratnam// (p. 75)

The French translators give this:

C'est lā, dit Surānanda, un procédé suggestif (ullekha) qu'il convient de suivre. On a dit en effet: La déese Parole triomphe comme elle veut: elle est pour les poétes la renomée et la felicité. Lorsqu'elle suggére par la bourbure (de l'expression) quelque joyau d'idée, elle améne un (résultat) inappreciable (p. 203).

That Karṇasundarī has been created by a different kind of creator is a recurrent theme of the play.[46] Thus in 1.54 the king upbraids the god of love, saying that he has no need to make ready his bow. Karṇasundarī has been created by a creator who is utterly different from the creator of the world (*lokavilakṣaṇena vidhinā kenâpi).* All Kāma has to do is animate the picture of her that the king has seen, and Kāma's work will be done.[47] Again, the phrase, *lokavilakṣaṇa vidhi* that is used here is an apt one to refer to the poet. In another verse, everything about her is said to be new or different, recalling to us Abhinavagupta's definition of poetry cited earlier, that poetry each time creates something new. Here is Bilhaṇa on his "poem," Karṇasundarī (3.5):[48]

> Difficult to describe is the unearthly beauty of her cheeks, which rivals that of mature palm leaves; her breaths are pursued by circles of bees, who drink their honeyed fragrance. The radiance of her beauty forms a veil to hide her slender form. Or shall I simply say that everything about the body of that fawn-eyed lady of languorous gait seems so utterly new and different?

Bilhaṇa's emphasis on the "newness" or "uniqueness" of Karṇasundarī may also reflect an issue that was clearly of concern to poets and dramatists: the relationship of the poet to his past. We have seen how Bilhaṇa strove to situate himself in relation to the greatest poet of the past, Valmīki. Even Kālidāsa had to worry about the propriety of creating something new, when there had existed so many wonderful poets before him. In the opening of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the *pāripārśvaka* asks the *sūtradhāra* why he is eager to produce the work of a contemporary poet, *vartamāna-kavi*, instead of one of the famous poets of the past.

46. I should add that it is a common theme in Sanskrit literature as a whole, and in some cases the same conclusion can be drawn as I draw for the *Karṇasundarī*, namely that the poet carefully draws a parallel between the uniqueness of the heroine and the originality of his own play. Compare the line in Act 2 of the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇaṃ* which the king recites in praise of the beauty of the heroine: *adyatanena vedhasā sṛjatā padârthântaraṃ parājitāḥ purātanāḥ prajā-sṛjaḥ.* "The present creator, in creating this thing which is utterly different, has surely outdone all the previous creators." Earlier, at the start of the play, we had been told that the play itself is *apūrva*, utterly new, and its *rasa*s are said to be *prayogâmṛtântarāṇi*, that is, to "yield a new kind of nectar in the performance." If we look closely at the language the parallel seems intended. The heroine is a new entity, possessing a different type of beauty, "*lāvaṇyâtiśayântara.*"

47. Unfortunately part of the verse has been garbled.

48. *kāntiḥ kâpi kapolayoḥ pariṇamat-tālī-dala-spardhinī*
vardhante madhupâvalī-valayinaḥ śvāsânilāḥ saṃtatam
kārśyasyâvaraṇaṃ taraṅgita-gater lāvaṇyam evâṅgake
*sāraṅgāyata-cakṣuṣaḥ kim athavā sarvaṃ navīnāyate.*3.5

The *sūtradhāra* replies that not all poetry that is ancient is good and not all poetry that is new is bad; it is up to those who are knowledgeable to judge both old and new works on the basis of their merits.[49] In *Śākuntalā*, Kālidāsa does not hesitate to emphasize the "newness" of his plot. While these verses may indicate a hesitancy with creating something new, later poets took pains to stress their originality. Padmagupta in the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* spoke of himself as going where no poet had gone before, while Bilhaṇa's contemporary, the Jain poet Rāmacandra, was practically obsessed with showing his independence from his predecessors. Here are two verses from his *Nalavilāsanāṭaka*.[50] Both verses are attributed by the actors to the poet himself. The first is in answer to the question whether the poet who wrote the play was original, *svayamutpādaka*, or derivative, *paropajīvaka*. The second verse explains how the poet understands originality. To be original does not mean to invent some new subject for poetry that no one would ever believe, but to use language that is fresh and moving.[51]

> Though I write poetry with words and ideas that I have discovered from my own intuition, people may still say that I am just following in the paths forged by others. But this is just a manner of speaking. After all, even on the new moon night, people still insist that it was the light of the moon that made the night lotuses bloom.
>
> People favor poems that use worn-out old words, no longer capable of stirring the heart, and that have subjects which are intentionally bizarre. The thought that I am not able to follow that path constantly nags at me.

49. *Mālavikāgnimitra* 1.2:
purāṇam ity eva na sādhu sarvaṃ
na câpi kāvyaṃ navam ity avadyam/
santaḥ parīkṣyânyatarad bhajante
mūḍhaḥ para-pratyayaneya-buddhiḥ//

50. *Nalavilāsanāṭaka*, verses 7 and 8 of the *āmukha*:
janaḥ prajñā-prāptaṃ padam atha padârthaṃ ghaṭayataḥ
parâdhvâdhvanyān naḥ kathayatu girāṃ vartanir iyam/
amāvasyāyām apy avikala-vikāsīni kumudāny
ayaṃ lokaś candra-vyatikara-vikāsīnī vadati//7//
spṛhāṃ lokaḥ kāvye vahati jaraṭhaiḥ kuṇṭhitatamair
vacobhir vācyena prakṛti-kuṭilena sthapuṭite/
vayaṃ vīthīṃ gāḍhuṃ katham api na śaktāḥ punar imām
iyaṃ cintā cetas taralayati nityaṃ kim api naḥ//8//

For more on Rāmacandra's struggle for originality see the Sanskrit introduction to the *Nalavilāsa*.

51. *api ca śapatha-pratyeya-pada-padârtha-sambandheṣu prītim ādadhānaṃ janam avalokya jāta-khedena tenedaṃ câbhihitam*, p. 2.

The evidence indicates that poets were keenly conscious of the past and anxious to make a new contribution.[52] Returning to the *Karṇasundarī*, I would like to understand the verses in which Karṇasundarī is said to be something utterly new in this context of the poet's quest for originality. A comparison of Karṇasundarī's creator to the ordinary creator who makes other beings, then, needs to be further nuanced. It is a statement of the superiority of the craft of the poet, very much in keeping with standard definitions of poetic creativity as knowing no bounds. But it should also no doubt be read as a statement of Bilhaṇa's unique gifts, his superiority over his predecessors, whose works followed in well-trodden paths and contained nothing out of the ordinary.

In addition to verses like 3.5 discussed here, there are other important indications in the play that Karṇasundarī is a different kind of creation and we need to look beyond the surface plot to understand her significance. Bilhaṇa may well have been influenced by Rājaśekhara in his *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* when he plays with Karṇasundarī as the object of a dream, a painted likeness, and even a reflection on a pillar.[53] In 2.30, for example, Karṇasundarī clings to a jeweled pillar and her friends cannot tell if she is reflected there (*pratibimbita*), sculpted (*ghaṭita*) or inlaid (*prota*). Bilhaṇa is not the only poet who seems to have adopted and adapted these motifs from Rājaśekhara's play; King Kulaśekhara Varman around 1100 AD in his *Tapatī-Saṃvaraṇaṃ* has the Vidūṣaka mistake a crystal pavilion for solid water and the girl he sees inside it for a painting applied to its surface.[54]

Bilhaṇa does not exploit the confusion between these different levels of reality, which seem to flow into each other, dream, painting, reflection, the girl herself. In my reading of the play, he is less interested than was Rājaśekhara in questions of metaphysics and more focused on the nature of poetry and its appreciation. Karṇasundarī is definitely real in the play, unlike, perhaps, the heroine of the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*. Let us look at the way in which the plot of the *Karṇasundarī* is ultimately resolved. Typical of these plays, the plot turns around disguises. We have seen that the queen disguises herself as Karṇasundarī; she also disguises her nephew as Karṇasundarī. In the second case, the king tricks the queen and substitutes the real Karṇasundarī for the nephew: the pretend-

52. One might add to this evidence Verse 15 in the first *sarga* of Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*: *prauḍhi-prakarṣeṇa purāṇa-rīti-vyatikramaḥ ślāghyatamaḥ padānām/ atyunnati-sphoṭita-kañcukāni vandyāni kāntā-kuca-maṇḍalāni//15//*

"Breaking out of an old mode by reaching new heights of the imagination is praiseworthy in the case of words; particularly desirable, after all, are the breasts of women that stretch so high they burst through their bodice."

53. See Granoff 2000. See also the comments in Tieken 2000, 115–38, particularly pp. 130ff.

54. *Tapatī-Saṃvaraṇam*, Act II, pp. 89–90.

Karṇasundarī turns out to be the genuine article. But she is nonetheless a different kind of being, who cannot always be distinguished from phantoms, dreams, and reflections.

If I am right that Karṇasundarī is above all the poem, the creation of the poet, then the final resolution of the plot is also a commentary on poetry. Karṇasundarī, the poet's creation and the object of the king's delectation transcends her ordinary mortal rival the queen, who is both disguised and disguiser. Perhaps it is not out of place to recall here the language in which theorists of poetry spoke of poetic appreciation. From Mahimabhaṭṭa to Abhinavagupta, the theorists had argued that the true experience of poetry was the experience of consciousness in its plenitude and in its pure and undisguised state. It was the experience of that which was ultimately real, free from the distractions of surrounding illusion.[55] In addition, Bilhaṇa seems to be telling us that the poetry of the theater is capable of leading us through its many tricks and disguises to the experience of the undisguised real.[56]

Returning to the *Karṇasundarī*, when the queen sees the real Karṇasundarī, whom she still thinks is her nephew dressed up as Karṇasundarī, she is taken aback. She says: "Amazing, it really is Karṇasundarī. We really have put on a good show."[57] More literally, we might translate this last sentence: "Praise be to the power of the theater, with its tricks and deceits!" We know that the power of the theater is that it has at last led us to the real Karṇasundarī. The theater, then, as theater is a display of illusions, tricks meant to deceive (*kapaṭa*). But at the same time, it is also poetry, which has the power to reveal to us what is ultimately true.

C. Conclusion

I have tried to show that the *Karṇasundarī*, at least on one level, is about poetry. In closing I would like to emphasize that its concerns with the nature of poetic creativity and the ability of false plays, *kapaṭa-nāṭaka*, to bring us to the truth,

55. On Mahimabhaṭṭa see Granoff 1978, 58, note 1. For more on the experience of poetry as akin to the experience of Brahma, see the citations in the introduction to the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, p. xi, quoting from the *Kāvyaprakāśa, Kāvyānuśāsana* and *Sāhityadarpaṇa*.

56. He does not make explicit exactly what this ultimate real is. I have suggested it is the *parama-brahma* of the medieval theorist; Narayana Rao suggested that it might be poetic inspiration itself. This would accord with Bilhaṇa's focus on poetry in the play. Given the tendency to equate poetic speech with *parama-brahma* or the ultimate real, we may differ here only in the term we have chosen to describe that ultimate: *brahma* or *pratibhā*.

57. *accariam paccakkhaṃ sevva esā / aho māhappaṃ kavaḍanāḍaassa*

are closely related. They were also not unique to Bilhaṇa. In fact, if Bilhaṇa is distinctive, it is as I have suggested earlier because of his greater interest in using the drama to tell us about the uniqueness of poetry, as well as to comment on the nature of reality and illusion. I noted earlier that Bilhaṇa may have been influenced by Rājaśekhara. In both his *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* and in his *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, Rājaśekhara plays with the indistinct borders between illusion and reality. I have discussed the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* at length elsewhere; I would like to comment here on the *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, which also dramatizes the difficulty we face in distinguishing reality and illusion.

A good portion of Act III of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* is taken up with a play-within-the-play; to assuage the pangs of his separation from Sītā, Rāvaṇa watches a new drama, the *Sītāsvayaṃvara*. When he gets too excited by the events he is witnessing, he must constantly be reminded by his companion that none of what he sees is real. He accustoms himself to the idea that he is merely watching a play, and when Rāma steps up to break Śiva's bow and win Sītā, he dismisses his words as the idle boasts of a stage actor.[58] Of course, we all know that within the context of the play, Rāma's words are in fact true. Rājaśekhara has tantalizingly inverted truth and falsehood, in what I would argue is a skillful questioning of the very nature of reality. What is perhaps more important for the present discussion is that he also directly equates the ability of the theater to present before us what is false as if it were real with a similar ability that lies in poetic speech. When Rāma breaks the bow and the Pratīhārī praises him, Rāvaṇa says to himself: "This is just the magic cow of poet's words, which can bring into being even something that is unreal."[59] Both drama and poetry here have the ability to create something new, something false, and something ultimately real.

Rājaśekhara was no doubt one of the most influential poets and theorists of poetry in medieval India. I have also made reference to another poet whom he influenced; this is the Jain monk/poet Rāmacandra, a contemporary of Bilhaṇa. His works provide another example of what I would call, for want of a better term, "philosophical" plays that use traditional dramatic themes to explore the nature of reality. Rāmacandra's *Raghunāthavilāsa*, for example, has numerous references to *kapaṭa-nāṭaka*; mirages and disguises also abound. In fact, the characters in the play never quite know what is real, and since more often than not instructions that such and such a ruse should be carried out are simply whispered in a character's ear, even the audience is not privy to many of the deceptions. The *Rāghunāthavilāsa* is in fact three plays: there is the obvious one, that is, the play

58. *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, p. 80.

59. *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, p. 81, *seyaṃ kavīnāṃ vacana-kāma-dhenuḥ yad asad-bhūtam api sūte.*

itself. But the actions of characters in the play are also described as if they were actions in some other play; for example Rāvaṇa's defeat at the hands of Lakṣmaṇa is described as the conclusion or *nirvahana* to a play directed by Lakṣmaṇa. Finally, there are all the attempts to trick a character by creating phantom images or using disguises that are called *kapaṭanāṭaka*, false plays. With these intersecting plays, the *Raghunāthavilāsa* is as much about theater and reality as it is about Rāma and Sītā.

Rāmacandra's play on the Nala story, the *Nalavilāsanāṭaka* has a similar play-within-a-play; characters from the frame play suddenly erupt into the embedded play and must be told that they have mistaken theater for reality. But this distinction is eventually blurred as Nala calls what has "really" happened to him itself a play.

As we evaluate the significance of these complex plots, I think we need to keep in mind that Rāmacandra, like other dramatists, considered himself first and foremost a poet. That is why I think a consideration of these often improbable plots can enhance our discussion of the Sanskrit drama as a commentary on the nature of poetry; in short, as a unique genre of works on literary theory.

Rājaśekhara, Bilhaṇa, Rāmacandra, and their contemporaries all lived in a world of great intellectual sophistication. They spoke of poetry and theater in the same breath; the author of a play is a poet, and many plays include a praise of poetry. Indeed, one might even say that the high art of the theater was in its verses, which we have seen were collected and circulated independently. Plays were as much meant to be read as poetry as they were meant to be performed at this time in history. I would like to suggest that Rājaśekhara and his followers, Bilhaṇa and Rāmacandra and no doubt others, represent a new self-consciousness about their craft and are willing to explore its mysteries through various media: texts on theory, poems, and drama. They clearly built on the works of their predecessors, as this essay has also tried to show, but their reflections on poetry and their use of their art to theorize about itself in a sustained manner seem somehow new. All three used the medium of the "theater" to challenge an audience to think about the real and the false; but for them the theater was also and perhaps primarily poetry. And poetry was a unique creation, one that stemmed from the mind and not from the elements of the material world; it was free from constraints and restrictions, liberated and liberating. As we reflect in these plays on the unique nature of the poet as creator, we come to see the ordinary creator as simply a poet of a lesser kind. And this can tell us as much about the status of the world, reality or illusion, as the intersecting reflections, pictures, and disguises, the plays within plays, that form the plot of our plays. This is truly literature in which literature, reflections on literature, and philosophy cannot be so easily separated.

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19

Shadows

Charles Malamoud

A. *Chāyā*

In January 1937, the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam was in exile in Voronezh. He was starving and scared; he felt abandoned by everybody. He wrote for help to his friend Yuri Tynianov. He concluded his letter by these words: "Please, don't consider me a shadow, I still cast a shadow."[1] So either you are a shadow or you cast a shadow. Being a shadow means being just a shadow: a shadow is all that is left of you. Casting a shadow means having or being something other than this shadow, a solid, non-transparent body.

Is this pattern applicable to what Indian mythology says about shadows? Of course the picture here is much more complicated. Still I believe that this division can be illuminating and can help us understand the structure of the *Naiṣadhacarita*. The *piśāca* demons do have a body solid and active enough to scratch and bite. But we learn from *Śākuntala* that, hungry for raw meat as they are, they are frightening shadows, the color of apes, they are like dark clouds at dusk.[2] The *rākṣasī* Siṃhikā takes hold of Hanumān's *chāyā*, forcing him to stop his progression in the air: so strong is the link between a body and its shadow—or rather between a shadow and its body.[3]

1. Quoted in Segal 1998.
2. *Śākuntala* III, st. 24.
3. Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sundarakāṇḍa* I 182 sq.

Living human beings have a body and a shadow, distinct and at the same time inseparable from each other. As long as a man lives he cannot get rid of his shadow.[4] Actually man is tied to evil, to his sins, as he is tied to his shadow. This is not a mere analogy. There is a substantial affinity between shadow and evil: according to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* II 2.3.10, man is tied to his sin as to his shadow: *chāyayeva vā ayaṃ puruṣo pāpmanānusaktaḥ*. It is at noon that one's shadow shrinks, so to speak, under one's feet. Then it is smallest, one can trample it down. It is also at noon that one tramples one's evil down. Therefore noon is the right moment to set one's sacrificial fire: *tat kaniṣṭham evaitat pāpmānam avabādhate tasmād u madhyandina evādadhīta*.[5]

Now shadow is not always linked to darkness. In the *Naiṣadhacarita*, sure enough, we find some stanzas where *chāyā* means "shade" or belongs to the domain of night. For instance XXI 136: "Why is Love never tired going from you (Nala) to her (Damayantī), from her to you. Perhaps only your shadow (*chāyaiva*) removes his fatigue from journeying...". Another example is XXII 38: "The darkness (*andhakāra*) attached shadows (*chāyā vidhāya*) as spies (*cārīḥ*) to diverse objects (*prativastulagnāḥ*) in order to find out the movements of things (*kīdṛg eṣāṃ pracāra[ḥ]*) during the day, its enemy." But generally *chāyā* is a synonym of *pratibimba*. It is a reflection. For instance, in *Sarga* VI, Nala is made invisible by Indra so that he can enter Bhīma's palace unseen, in order to meet Damayantī secretly and tell her that the *lokapāla*s want her to become the wife of one of them. Nala runs through the inner apartments crowded with pretty young women, Damayantī's female attendants. While nobody can see it directly, Nala's body has volume and weight. One can hear him running, his steps leave visible tracks, he can feel and be felt. Damayantī's attendants try to grasp him. But for them he is *chāyāmaya*. The shadow he casts is actually his reflection on the polished surfaces of their jewels (VI 30). His own jewels are mirrors in which they see their own images (VI 40). In fact Nala spreads out a series of bodies. His numerous reflections make a *pratibimbadehavyūha* (VI 46). These girls fall in love with him, invisible as he is. Their modesty, *dhairya*, has been vanquished, exhausted by Nala's shadowy beauty, his *chāyāsaundarya* (VI 30). Still there must be some darkness in these shining images since the *mahiṣī*s, king Bhīma's queens, interpret them by reasoning (*tābhir atarki*): this *chāyā* is love, turned blue by the flames of Śiva's eyes (VI 44).

While in X 94 the crowd of Damayantī's friends would not leave her alone and sticks to her like her own *chāyā*, in *Sarga* III, the *haṃsa*, looking for an opportunity to describe Nala to Damayantī and to tell her that only he deserves

4. Cf. *Naiṣadhacarita* III 8.

5. Cf. Krick 1982, 543. Krick also quotes *Jaimini-Brāhmaṇa* II 369–70.

to become her husband, wants to meet her when she is *chāyādvitīyā*—that is, with no other company—literally, no double—other than her shadow (III 12).

This adjective *chāyādvitīya* reminds us of the *svayaṃvara* in the epic *Nalopākhyāna*, where it is used with a different meaning: among the features by which the man Nala can be distinguished from the gods who took his appearance, there is the fact that only he is *chāyādvitīya*, doubled by a shadow, which implies that it is in the nature of gods not to cast shadows.

In the *Nalopākhyāna* being bound to a shadow can be considered an imperfection, a weakness of the human body as compared to the gods who, contrary to men, do not sweat, do not blink, do not let garlands of flowers wither on their skin, do not touch the earth above which they are standing.

In the *Naiṣadhacarita* narrative it is quite the opposite. The gods are deprived of shadow. The poet lets us understand that Nala and Damayantī as a pair and Nala by himself are superior to the gods. In the case of the *svayaṃvara*, at least, the gods are imitations; in a way, they are fake, they play a role, whereas Nala and Damayantī are just their magnificent selves. So when at last Damayantī is made able to distinguish the real mortal Nala from among the five images of Nala in front of her, the poet elaborates on the reasons and meanings of these differences between Nala and his divine rivals.

This is a remarkable feature of the poem, and I believe of *kāvya* at large: the appearance and behavior of things and beings are always meant to express some intention. What happens to things and people is always in keeping with their essential nature, it is a confirmation of it, sometimes quite surprising and even bizarre. An example of this is XI 9: the gods look admiringly at Damayantī's face, they are in rapture. To their natural blinklessness (*svabhavikānimiṣatā*) they join the fixity of their gaze as they do not want to detach their eyes from her even for a moment. That makes two reasons. The same gods who are in the habit of drinking *amṛta* from the moon now drink another kind of *amṛta* from Damayantī's lips. Two reasons again. That very duality makes a similarity between what happens to their eyes and what happens to their lips. Sometimes events, accidents, circumstances are the occasion to confirm, to underline the meaning of a name, to justify it by a new and unexpected explanation. People, things, behaviors are always over-determined.

Now we learn in XIV 18 why the gods don't touch the earth with their feet: it is because they know that, even before marrying Damayantī, Nala is the earth's consort; a wife cannot hold with devotion the feet of any male other than her husband (XXI 11). Nala blinks, the gods don't: it is because Nala, only he, is beckoning to Damayantī: "come here, let us unite," *iha tvam āgatya nale mila*, this is Nala's *saṃjñānadāna* (XIV 19). There is no dust on the gods. Dust is made of particles of earth. Dust on Nala's garment is but the mark left by earth's embraces. Drops of sweat are seen on Nala's body: they are diamonds on

a surface of gold, and they are also meant to abate the heat caused in him by the fever of separation from Damayantī (XIV 21). The garlands remain fresh on the gods' neck and chest, Nala's garland is fading; it is as if this garland thought: "having won Damayantī to-day, will Nala have any regard for me (*śraddhāsyate mām*)?" (XIV 22).

Finally the shadow. This *chāyā* of Nala's is actually Nala's splendor, *śrī*. The gods cannot share it. Mallinātha's commentary explains that Nala's *chāyā* is a *leśa* of his charm, his *kānti*. Since the gods don't even have the *leśa*, how could they have something of Nala's *śobhā*? And also: *chāyā* here means *pratibimba*. Even that they don't have. How could they possibly have the original thing? Or they just share in Nala's *śobha* as actors hold the brilliance of the characters in a play, *naṭavat* (XIV 23). The gods could take Nala's appearance thanks to their *māyā*, and this appearance is but a shadow, *chāyā* (XX 70). Being a mortal Nala "has" a shadow, whereas Indra and the other gods, while looking like Nala, don't cast a shadow but "are" Nala's reflection.

B. *Śeṣa* and *Śleṣa*

Now Nala is not just any mortal man. In order to go further into the relationship between Nala and his shadow, and Nala and the gods, I have to make a detour and discuss the importance of *śeṣa* and *śleṣa* for the plot and the characters of the *Naiṣadhacarita*.

In several verses of the *Naiṣadhacarita*, the poet uses words and phrases that belong to the meta-language of *kāvya*. Let us call them meta-poetic. Actually, the meta-poetic turn is there as soon as the poet shows that he is aware that what he is saying is a text.[6] A striking, though rather complex example of the meta-poetic attitude is III 24, where the poet points out a paradox not in the content but in the form he himself had given to the meaning he had to express:

> The king, who is a sacrificer and has bestowed his wealth on learned brāhmaṇas in his service enjoys his kingdom after having put it at the disposal of learned men, just as he partakes of the sacrificial butter

6. Cf. XIX 1: *niśi daśamitām ālingantyāṃ vibodhavidhitsubhir*
niṣadhavasudhāmīnāṅkasya priyāṇkam upeyuṣaḥ
śrutimadhupadasragvaidagdhīvibhāvitabhāvika-
sphuṭarasabhṛśābhyaktā vaitālikair jagire giraḥ //

"As the night declined, bards, wishing to awaken Nala, Cupid in the land of Niṣadha, lying by the side of his beloved, chanted forth strains lavishly drenched with distinct poetic sentiments, and accompanied by a variety of emotions, and expressed with the art that is in melodious wreaths of words."

after having offered it to the gods; but lo! he enjoys the first object "last," and the last "first."[7]

(I am quoting Handiqui's translation throughout.)[8]

The fourth *pāda* is a kind of exegesis or characterization of the preceding three: it gives the label *"śeṣa"* to what has been described as *kṛtvādhvarājya* and the label *"aśeṣa"* to what has been named *rājya*. Here is the sequence of the ideas: the king is a sacrificer. Just as he eats the leftovers of *ājya* once he has offered the first and main portion of it to the gods, in the same way he enjoys (literally: eats) his kingdom once he has given the *dakṣiṇā* and completed the sacrifice. Whereas he eats the *śeṣa* of the *ājya*, he eats the *aśeṣa*, the whole, of his kingdom. The word *aśeṣa* comes after the word *śeṣa* in the sentence that sums up the process, just as the act of eating the whole (of the kingdom) comes after, and as a consequence of, the eating of the leftovers (of the ghee). Now what is surprising (*aho*) is that *aśeṣa* means also "what is not *śeṣa*" and applies to the whole before it has been divided into a main part and a "rest" or, as well as to what remains once this main part has been set apart. In other words, *aśeṣa* is ambiguous: it can be the antonym of *śeṣa* ("what is not the *śeṣa*," the main thing) and the complement of *śeṣa* ("that which has no *śeṣa*," complete). One can see that the poet finds surprising a situation he has himself created. This is a paradox only if one considers that *aśeṣa* has simultaneously both meanings here. As far as definitions are concerned, *aśeṣa* precedes *śeṣa*, the rest is necesarily the rest of something. In reality, the sacrificial *śeṣa* precedes the *aśeṣa* of the kingdom.

A simpler and more commonplace example of the meta-poetic turn can be found in III 69, where the *haṃsa* refers to the meaning of the double śloka Damayantī has just uttered (*ślokadvayārtha*), and in IV 101,[9] where the poet remarks that Damayantī and her friends are exchanging half-ślokas: "She talked with her dear friends in verses, she herself speaking one half and her friend the other half."

But of course meta-poetics appear most clearly in passages where the characters in the poem notice and somehow analyse the presence and function of *śleṣa* in the discourse of their interlocutors.

7. *rājā sa yajvā vibhudavrajatrā*
kṛtvādhvarājyopamayaiva rājyam /
bhuṅkte śritaśrotriyasātkṛtaśrīḥ
pūrvaṃ tv aho śeṣam aśeṣam antyam //
8. *Naiṣadhacarita of Śrīharṣa*, trans. K. K. Handiqui, 1956.
9. *priyasakhīnivahena sahātha sā*
vyaracayad giram ardhasamasyayā /

I would like to examine some of these passages. They are not here as a part of a śāstric exposition. Rather they appear in dialogues and monologues; they are used by the characters of the narrative to describe what they feel or what they understand of the situation in which they are involved.

C. The King, the Earth, and the Cardinal Regions

Before I come to my point I must make a few remarks on the plot of the *Naiṣadhacarita*.

In the *Nalopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata*, the very first thing we learn about Nala is that he is a king: *āsīd rājā nalo nāma*. Then comes a brief list of the qualities and virtues of this king. The only characteristic feature in this portrait is that Nala has a passion for dice playing: this, of course, is a hint as it announces what will happen later on, what is the main topic of the narrative, as it is a part and in some way a miniature image of the whole epic. In the *Nalopākhyāna*, the *svayaṃvara* is just the beginning of the main story, the story of how Nala loses and recovers his wife.

In the *Naiṣadhacarita*, on the other hand, the *svayaṃvara* is the climax of the whole poem. The core of it is the dramatic moment when Damayantī faces five copies of Nala and has to decide which is the genuine Nala, the four others being mere images of this model. This takes place in *sarga*s XIII and XIV. What precedes is just a preparation for it and what follows, with the exception of *sarga* XVII, is the description of the happy and blessed life Nala and Damayantī live as a consequence of Damayantī's successful *svayaṃvara* and their marriage.

Now in the *Naiṣadhacarita*, unlike the *Nalopākhyāna*, the royal quality of Nala is a topic for elaborate explanations, which are momentous for the whole story. Being a king, Nala is *bhūpāla*. As such he is the sovereign and the protector of all the *diś*, the cardinal regions. He is a *lokapāla*. Now the regions of the sky are also the domain of celestial guardians, the divine *lokapāla*s. Each cardinal region is protected and dominated by a specific god. The relation of a region to its divine *lokapāla* is that of a devoted and loving wife to her husband. Both the mortal king and the immortal sovereigns of the *diś* are *lokapāla*s. But while each divine *lokapāla* is the protector of just one region, the mortal king is the sovereign of all of them. This implies that the mortal king is in fact made of portions, *aṃśa*, of the substance of each immortal *lokapāla*. He has a substantial affinity with them.[10] He is but a part of each of these gods, but as a whole he is the sum of all these parts: the king is an image and also a mixture of a number of gods, simultaneously. This is in keeping with what is taught in the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*

10. Manu VII 4; cf. Kane 1973, 23.

and other dharma texts.[11] The list of these gods, both models and components of the king, may vary but it always includes Indra and Yama. Now here is what Śrīharṣa says in I 6:

> Being the lord of the regions, his might was composed of portions
> from the divine lords of the regions. He had in the law books a third
> eye which checked the march of desire and indicated his descent
> from three-eyed Śiva. [12]

The same idea is expressed in III 89, by Damayantī, when she speaks of Nala, the king, her beloved, to the messenger of the gods who is in front of her, not knowing that he is Nala:

> Nala is a king, hence the impersonation of the eight divine lords of
> the quarters. Devoted as I am to him they are pleased with me,
> otherwise it was impossible that coming of thy own accord,
> thou shouldst become the guarantee of my winning him. [13]

Four of the eight *lokapāla*s of whom Nala is an *aṃśa* happen to be his rivals. Damayantī explains to the messenger of the gods that she vows to obey Nala as a mortal wife must obey and serve her mortal husband: for the sake of enjoyment and because it is her duty. But Nala, because he is *kṣitibhṛt*, is also *aṃśagata*, composed of parts of the divine *lokapāla*s, although he is, as a mortal, *adevadeha* (VI 94). So the components are divine but the whole is mortal. Still, the gods who are to appear as Nala's duplicata in Damayantī's *svayaṃvara* are also those of whom Nala is a portion. Damayantī feels that being the wife of Nala is not only the link between a mortal woman and a mortal spouse. She will be to Nala what each of the cardinal regions is to each of the *lokapāla*s. And just as Nala the king contains in himself and actually *is* the whole set of the *lokapāla*s, Damayantī is the whole set of the regions—that is, the earth, *kṣiti*, *bhū*. (The queen represents the actual earth, as the earth is the king's wife. Nala is already *kṣitibhṛt*. When she

11. Is there a special affinity between the king and Yama? Both of them rule over the multitudes of the mortal and the dead respectively, both of them use *daṇḍa*, both of them are embodiments of *dharma*. Cf. Malamoud 2000, 13–33. The king Naḍa Naiṣadha mentioned in *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* II 3. 2.1–2 is clearly associated with Yama.

12. *digīśavṛndāṃśavibhūtir īśitā*
diśāṃ sa kāmaprasarāvarodhinīm /
babhāra śāstrāṇi dṛśaṃ dvayādhikām
nijatrinetrāvataratvabodhikām //

13. *sa bhūbhṛd aṣṭāv api lokapālās*
tair me tadekâgradhiyaḥ prasede /
na hītarasmād ghaṭate yad etya
svayaṃ tadāptipratibhūr mamābhūḥ //

becomes his wife Damayantī will be the earth. Maybe this allows us to infer a difference between two kinds of *diś*: the space of the divine regions is the sky, the space of the regions which are the domain of the king is the horizon of the earth. But of course, being directions, these two notions of *diś* tend to merge).

D. Sarasvatī and Damayantī's Wisdom

Now a major feature of the plot of the *Naiṣadhacarita*, and a major difference from the *Nalopākhyāna*, is that among the dramatis personae there is the goddess Sarasvatī. In the *Nalopākhyāna*, Damayantī manages eventually to distinguish the genuine Nala out of the group of five images of Nala thanks to a *satyakriyā*, an "act of truth," by thinking: if it is true that I love Nala with all my heart and that I am going to die if I cannot marry him, if I say the truth by saying that, then the gods are bound to reveal themselves for what they are and to manifest the difference between the mortal Nala and their own divine characteristics. In the *Naiṣadhacarita*, Damayantī has to rely on what Sarasvatī says. Sarasvatī is apparently urging Damayantī to make up her mind and to choose one of her suitors. Her speech is a series of ambiguous eulogies. She points to one of the Nalas, praises him in verses that can each time be understood in two ways, one which applies to one of the four divine *lokapāla*s who came to the *svayaṃvara*, another that applies to the real Nala. These ambiguous verses are, no wonder, fine examples of *śleṣa*. Damayantī is at a loss: neither from what she sees nor from what she hears does she receive any indication which could help her distinguish which is the true Nala. Still, Sarasvatī has made four speeches of that kind. A fifth Nala remains. Why don't you choose this last one, says Sarasvatī? And she starts to praise this fifth Nala and again it is a display of *śleṣa*. Each of her sentences applies to Nala and to the gods. But this time, while what she says may be referred to each of the divine suitors, in turn, she is describing the same person in the crowd, the fifth and last image of Nala.

Damayantī is still at a loss. She compares her present state of mind, now that she is in front of several Nalas, who even if (four of them) are pseudo-Nalas, are really present, to the hallucinations she had when Nala, being a mere image of her mind, tormented her by his absence. Now Nala is present and absent simultaneously. She feels a kind of mysterious attraction towards this fifth and last figure. But she does not trust herself. Maybe, she says, it is precisely because he comes last that this remaining Nala seems to her to be the good one. Here Damayantī compares her feelings to a poetic device (XIII 54):

> But why does the last Nala, though just like the other Nalas, drench
> my heart with streams of nectar? Or perhaps in spite of the similarity

> in letters between the first and the last word, the grace of the beauty of alliteration flashes in the last word only? [14]

Just as the second occurrence of a sound in alliterations has a brighter splendor than the first one, so the vision of the last Nala brings more joy than the vision of the preceding ones. But that does not mean that the last Nala is more likely to be the real, mortal Nala. Still, this last one, being a *śeṣa*, being what remains at the end of an enumeration, captures the ambiguous status of the leftover: this one is the leftover of the gods, so maybe he is not a god, the only one in the series who does not belong to the series?

Now comes what is the equivalent of the *satyakriyā* in the *Nalopākhyāna*. She implores the gods, performs many acts that are as many proofs of her piety. As a result, she has a vision of the gods, not as copies of Nala, but as they are in their glorious regular *mūrti*s. The gods are satisfied by the genuineness of Damayantī's devotion. They give her, as a *prasāda*, the intellectual ability to understand what is implied in Sarasvatī's successive speeches. More precisely, they impart to her the ability to work out the structure of these speeches.

In fact, the benevolence of the gods is such that they give Damayantī *sādhu-dhī*, the wisdom to understand how Sarasvatī's speeches are created, the pieces of *kāvya* of which they are composed. She is able to analyse the *sārasvatasūktisṛṣṭi* (XIV 9):

> Having obtained the favour of the gods she recalled the manner of composition of Sarasvatī's pleasant speeches. The gods indeed, when pleased, give nothing else than that they grant a well ordered mind.[15]

Therefore Damayantī sets her mind again on the fifth and last Nala and on what Sarasvatī said about him. She connects each stanza with the subject matter to which it applies. In this last speech each stanza has to be referred to one and only one of the four *lokapāla*s. She understands that each stanza, taken in itself, expresses the love of one cardinal region for its own husband and protector. But taken together, as a whole, these stanzas can refer only to Nala. Only Nala can be

14. *itaranalatulābhāg eṣa śeṣaḥ sudhābhiḥ*
snapayati mama ceto naiṣadhaḥ kasya hetoḥ /
prathamacaramayor vā śabdayor varṇasakhye
vilasati carame 'nuprāsabhāsāṃ vilāsaḥ //

15. *prasādam āsādya suraiḥ kṛtaṃ sā*
sasmāra sārasvatasūktisṛṣṭeḥ /
devā hi nānyad vitaranti kiṃ tu
prasadya te sādhudhiyaṃ dadante //

the second *artha* of stanzas the first *artha* of which is each a different god. Only Nala is the semantic equivalent of all the gods, since he is the addition of *aṃśa*s of all of them. Now Damayantī is able to characterize Sarasvatī's way of speaking: it is *śleṣa*. This enables her to identify the *śeṣa*. The true Nala is the remaining whole, once the partial identifications are done with. A god can just be himself and a copy of Nala. Only Nala can be himself and a model for all the gods. In this *śeṣa* the *śleṣa* happens to be discriminating (XIV 16):

> That those words of hers conveyed a twofold meaning is verily the play of her poetic power. For even the divine lords of the regions, altogether different (from Nala), played the role of mortal kings.[16]

The gods are happy to see that Damayantī could use her brains: their gift of *sādhu-dhī* met a worthy recipient. They gladly show that they are no longer in the competition. They manifest themselves with all their divine unmistakable characteristics, so that Damayantī can safely give her garland to the only Nala who, being made of the substance of all the gods, is therefore the true Nala.

In the case of Sarasvatī's speeches, the poetic device of *śleṣa* is not only that the same string of syllables can convey two or more different meanings and therefore refer to two or several realities. Here it is meant to describe or to evoke a reality which is by itself ambiguous. The verbal *śleṣa* corresponds to a blending in the reality. Sarasvatī's ambiguous sentences refer to the divine *lokapāla*s and to the *bhūpāla* Nala simultaneously because there is substantially something common to the gods and Nala. Not only is Nala, as a *bhūpati, bhūbhṛt*, a combination of divine *aṃśa*s: the gods themselves, when they leave the *svayaṃvara* scene, leave something of themselves. Something: an *aṃśa*. They feel mutilated. As if, by transforming themselves into an image of somebody else, they had to abandon a part of their being to the model they imitate (XIV 99):

> At that moment the gods, leaving the king, a portion of their own selves, felt a pain that is caused by the mutilation of a limb. Sarasvatī too, full of anxious thoughts as she was departing looked at Damayantī the abode of her own grace, turning and turning round. [17]

16. *śliṣyanti vāco yad amūr amuṣyāḥ*
kavitaśakteḥ khalu te vilāsāḥ /
bhūpālalīlāḥ kila lokapālāḥ
samāviśanti vyatibhedino'pi //

17. *svasyāmarair nṛpatim aṃśam amuṃ tyajadbhir*
aṃśacchidākadanam eva tadādhyagāmi /
utkā sma paśyati nivṛtya nivṛtya yāntī
vāgdevatāpi nijavibhramadhāma bhaimīm //

It is not only with Damayantī that Sarasvatī uses *kāvya* devices. Brahmā scolds her for using *vakrokti* (III 30):

> In vain the Creator, devoted to religious observances, endeavours to detain the goddess of speech by means of silence. Immersed in the study of the Vedas, he knows not that the crooked goddess, clasping Nala's neck, is there content with the flow of sentiments.[18]

Then Nala in turn, when he acts as a messenger of the gods, says he does not trust Damayantī's denials. He suspects Damayantī of uttering sentences which can be fully understood only if one perceives the *dhvani* in them: when she says no, isn't she really saying yes? (IX 50):

> Or perhaps it is an affirmative assertion of thine, disguised as a negative; crookedness in speech does certainly befit thee: the mouth of a clever woman is a mine of that Poetic Suggestion of which this is a flash. [19]

Actually Sarasvatī acts sometimes as the inner voice, or the clever mind of Damayantī. Whereas Nala is the sum of the *aṃśa*s of the *lokapāla*s plus a *śeṣa*, the mortal princess Damayantī shares with the goddess of speech the quality of the *śleṣakavi*. This quality is perceived by the *haṃsa* when he comments on Damayantī's answers to his questions (III 66–69).

E. Love's Shadow

Another character appears in the *Naiṣadhacarita* who was not present in the *Nalopākhyāna*: it is Kāma or Kandarpa or Smara, the god of Love. Between Nala and Love there is a special affinity just as there is a special relationship between Damayantī and the goddess Sarasvatī. True, Smara hardly speaks, he is mostly spoken of and addressed. He does not have such an independent role in the plot as Sarasvatī does, but he is constantly there. Hardly a person by himself, he is the projection of the feelings of desire and longing inside the main persons of the narrative, the two lovers, and perhaps also those of the gods who are in the

18. *alaṃ sajan dharmavidhau vidhātā*
ruṇaddhi maunasya miṣeṇa vāṇīm /
tatkaṇṭham āliṅgya rasasya tṛptāṃ
na veda tāṃ vedajaḍaḥ sa vakrām //

19. *niṣedhaveṣo vidhir eṣa te'thavā*
tavaiva yuktā khalu vāci vakratā /
vijṛmbhitaṃ yasya kila dhvaner idaṃ
vidagdhanārīvadanaṃ tadākaraḥ //

position of Damayantī's suitors. In that respect, the love story of Nala and Damayantī becomes in the *kāvya* poem the story of the relation between the main characters and Love. Whereas the link between Sarasvatī and Damayantī is more or less of the *guru-śiṣya* type and is based on the way both of them use language, the link between Smara and Nala is mainly the resemblance of their looks and their rivalry. Loving Nala, is it Nala that Damayantī loves? Isn't it rather Smara himself? Just as in the *svayaṃvara*, Nala is the winner in this competition. The link between Nala and Love is made more surprising and complex by this simple fact: Smara is bodyless, this is why he is called *atanu*, *anaṅga*. Smara's body was burned to ashes by a glance of Śiva's third eye. The causes and the consequences of this event are the main theme of Love's mythology. Being bodyless doesn't prevent Love from being quite efficient. He never stops tormenting other peoples' bodies with the flames of desire and pains of separation. His presence is constantly felt and at the same time he is invisible. Is he a ghost, then? That is what Damayantī says to him: you are a *pareta*, a dead person, you must have become a *piśāca*, because of the sin, *enas*, you committed by constantly creating illusion, *mohana*, in people's minds (IV 8).

Now Nala, almost dying from the sorrow of being separated from his beloved Damayantī, grows so thin that he almost becomes *anaṅga*, bodyless, just like his tormentor. But he retains a residue, a *śeṣa*: it is his beauty, the *lāvaṇya*, which allows him not to give up his rivalry with Smara (III 109). In fact, bodyless as he is, Smara remains supremely beautiful and Nala is just as beautiful as Smara. Or is it not the other way round? Smara actually is beautiful because he resembles Nala. When the creator shaped Smara he had Nala in his mind, the idea, the project of Nala was his model for Smara. Love is but the image, that is, the replica and the shadow (*praticchāyā*) of Nala:

> Cupid is thine own reflection, thine, who art in our friend's heart is
> your own reflection, otherwise how doth Cupid, who is bodyless,
> reṣemble thee in beauty? (XX 42)[20]

Love resents the difference it makes being deprived of a body. He, reportedly, says, speaking of Nala:

> We used to have a similar shape. Mine is burned out while his is
> not even heated. Thus out of envy, as it were, the bodyless one

20. *satas te'tha sakhīcitte*
praticchāyā sa manmathaḥ /
tvayāsya samarūpatvam
atanor anyathā katham //

created fire in Nala's body, from the torment of your absence.
(III 102).[21]

What remains of Love once his body has been burned is a shadow. This shadow is attached to Nala's body. Nala casts a shadow, the very shadow that distinguishes him, a living mortal, from his rivals, the gods. What Nala has, Love is. The body to which this shadow belongs is Nala. Nala cannot get rid of his shadow, he is bound to be constantly accompanied by it, that is, he is obsessed by Love: *śaśāka śaṅke sa na laṅghitum* (I 47). Nala and Smara share the same shadow. Nala *has* a shadow which is not his. Smara "is" this shadow, but it belongs to Nala.

These are a few examples of the play of *śleṣa* and *śeṣa* in the "Lecture upon the Shadow"[22] embedded in the *Naiṣadhacarita*.

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21. *tulyāvayor mūrtir abhūn madīyā*
dagdhā paraṃ sāsya na tāpyate'pi /
ity abhyasūyann iva dehatāpaṃ
tasyātanus tvadvirahād vidhatte //

22. To quote the title of John Donne's poem.

20

Indian *Kāvya* Poetry on the Far Side of the Himālayas

Translation, Transmission, Adaptation, Originality

Dan Martin

In memory of Michael Hahn (1941–2014)

> The lake filled with Jinendra's liquid knowledge
> the skillful workers churned, and born of their churning, the sun;
> the sun a blazing hood-ornament of a cobra from which
> the sign of killing the benighted ones' darkness,
> the swaying tendril-entwined sword of insight, came,
> the sword that will and must protect us.[1]

1. Because the page is missing in Bod Mkhas-pa 1972, I have used another version of the same text in *Kāvya Texts from Bhutan* (1976, 282). Tibetan readers may judge whether I have rendered this originally four-line verse accurately enough. The "s" alliterations in my rather free translation are partially justified in the "s" sounds in three of the verbs in the original (the verbs for "churning," "killing," and "protecting"), but they also seemed to go nicely with the image of the snake. *rgyal dbang mkhyen pa'i chu mtsho legs byas kyis // bsrubs skyes nyi ma 'bar ba'i gdengs ka nas // rmongs pa'i mun pa gsod rtags shes rab kyi // ral gri'i khri shing g.yo ba des srungs shig.* In my footnotes I have attempted to balance the needs of Tibetologists, Indologists, and non-specialists who might want to follow up on, criticize, or develop upon these research efforts, but with no pretense of complete bibliographical coverage. This was written in 2004, and has changed only a little since then, so more recent publications are not so likely to receive attention. The members of our group at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem provided me with a great learning experience. I also received much valuable advice from Dragomir Dimitrov, then in Kathmandu, who read this essay carefully and offered many corrections. I must thank Ulrike Roesler for reading the draft and making very useful comments. Thanks to David Jackson for sending me some of his writings that were needed. Through electronic communications, E. Gene Smith helped resolve some special problems. Ophira Gamliel (Jerusalem) helped me read and translate the very challenging Sanskrit verses by Vajradeva, although only one sample verse has been included here.

A. Introduction

The opening homage verse, borrowed and translated from Bod Mkhas-pa's 1678 CE commentary on Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror*, is offered here for the same reason it was offered there, as homage to the sources of inspiration and a hope for insight. At the same time it supplies a relatively simple sampling of the types of problems commonly confronted in attempts to transmit Tibetan poetry of the Indian kind in English medium. For the time being, I will not attempt to explain every facet of this culturally complex verse by an author who is widely regarded as the most lucid and eloquent Tibetan interpreter of Daṇḍin, except to supply the most basic keys to understanding it. Having no way of knowing how much of it made sense to you already, I assume that many English readers will not recognize that, as so often in homage verses, the divine object of invocation is indicated through metonymy. The sword (we might think of this as an "emblem") wielded in the right hand of Mañjuśrī ("Gentle [Voiced] Lord") stands in the place of the whole divine form of this compassionate, and despite the sword by no means militant, Bodhisattva. Mañjuśrī is a focus of human aspirations in the realm of oral and literary arts generally, with more specific links to the insight (*prajñā*) and memory (*smṛti*) that figure iconographically in the sword and book to His right and left. Bod Mkhas-pa's homage prayer in fact continues for a few pages, with most of it devoted not to Mañjuśrī, but rather to Sarasvatī, His feminine counterpart for inspiration in language arts. Sarasvatī is often more specifically connected to musicality and poetics (symbolized by the stringed instrument, the *vīṇā*, held in Her lap), and sometimes grammar, too. Although the first line makes reference to the knowledge of the Buddha (here called Jinendra, "Lord of Victors"), most of the imagery is drawn from a relatively well known (to Tibetans) non-Buddhist but surely Indic account of the creation, or rather cosmic renewal, of the universe in the myth of the churning of the ocean of milk—gods on one side, demons on the other, playing tug-of-war with a snake wrapped around the churning stick that is the cosmic mountain. This scene is most impressively displayed in statues outside the eastern gate of Bayon Temple near Angkor Wat, as well as on reliefs on the walls of the circumambulatory of the main temple of Angkor Wat itself.[2] The snake wrapped around the churning stick is poetically equated with the tendrils entwining the sword. Images of world-creation, Buddhist enlightenment, and literary creativity are thus intertwined and condensed in a culturally rich and creative way. This tendency

2. I speak from personal experience, based on a recent visit to Cambodia, although those who require a published source may see Bhattacharyya 1959, or any one of a large number of illustrated guides to the ruins that have been published in recent years.

to engage images from non-Buddhist mythology, or to refer to things known in India but absent in Tibet—how many home-bound Tibetans could have ever seen a live cobra?—is a constant in Tibetan traditions of *kāvya*. These types of alien yet somehow and in some degree naturalized Indian cultural images that seemingly fill the repertoires of so many Tibetan poets make it difficult to present literary renditions of their poetry without weighting down each line with one or more superscribed footnote numbers. Over-explanation, as is only too well known, may spell death to literary appreciation.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to making Tibetan literature known to a larger academic audience is precisely this use of Indic literary conventions. Tibetologists are sometimes forced to think their way through two cultures, and scholars who are truly and equally conversant with Indian and Tibetan cultures and their languages are as rare as the proverbial *udumbara* flower, the potential pitfalls many, the amount of unfinished work daunting. It would perhaps be foolhardy to expect non-specialists, or even specialists on one side or the other, to follow all the convoluted calculations and attendant complications that take place when translators from Tibetan sources look backward to India before going forward to the modern target language. This demands high proficiency in three literary cultures embedded in at least three difficult languages.

While not counting myself among those adequate to the task, I will bravely court dishonor and venture to say something, from a perspective that is primarily historical even when not strictly regimented along chronological lines, about the cultural transfer of Indian literature, its impact on Tibet, and uses Tibetans made of it in their own literary creations. There being a need to simplify without compromising, without overstating or overcompensating, the writer, if not entirely blocked, keeps wondering how best to put things, how far to steer the mode of presentation toward one or another kind of imagined reader. Perhaps we should just get started and see what happens—but first a few words about the Tibetan language and its degrees of representation.

The idea that Tibetologists adopted their transcription systems from Welsh, given that both have a large number of unpronounced letters, expresses a popular perception as well as a widespread lack of knowledge of how the Tibetan system of writing works.[3] But rather than give grossly inadequate

3. My knowledge of this popular idea about the transliteration of Tibetan being based on Welsh is based primarily on oral information, although for a printed source I could mention a paperback journalistic account of Tibetan Buddhism in the United States titled *Open Secrets* by Walt Anderson (my copy seems to have been misplaced). It is especially surprising to see the statement that Tibetan transcription systems are "derived from the customary spelling of Old Irish" in the late Marianne Winder's introduction to Rechung Rinpoche's 1976 book on Tibetan medicine (p. 5). We could just laugh this off, if only it had been intended as a joke. Just 50 years ago, paper

phonetic approximations of pronunciation, as is done in many popularizing accounts, all too frequently rendering the names unrecognizable to those who do know Tibetan, I will give Tibetan proper names in their shortest possible forms (but using phonetic versions for proper names that are quite well known, like Milarepa or Tsongkhapa), relegating the more technical Tibetological discussions of nomenclature, terminology, and bibliography to the footnotes. Wherever possible and appropriate, we will at least employ terms and names more familiar to Indologists, but even then with a general preference for English-language formulations.

While we will focus first of all on Indian *kāvya*-style literature that found a home in Tibet, I approach the task as a Tibetologist, imagining what might be more interesting from an Indologist's point of view. Although interesting in its own right as well as relevant to many of our concerns, I will limit discussion about Tibetan compositions, whether in *kāvya* style or not. I simply cannot cover all this scattered material, some of it rare or entirely unavailable.[4] Among other related topics of interest, I will say only a little about Indian-language manuscripts that were preserved in Tibet (there were many), and nothing about why it was India, not China, that supplied the outside models for Tibetan learning and literature (evidently due primarily to a desire to receive Buddhist teachings directly from their sources, both human and textual, in India, and not because one country was more accessible than the other). I will be as plain-spoken as possible, not quoting nearly enough of the poetry, while avoiding the more arcane tidbits of Tibetology; well, as far as that's possible. If I do not entirely succeed in this, I hope my effort will be appreciated.

It is arguable, historically, that the very earliest available *kāvya* (of course, ignoring for now the *kāvya* elements in epic literature) was produced by Buddhists, meaning primarily the two *mahākāvya* works by Aśvaghoṣa,[5] in about

presenters in Asian studies conferences would simply do their best to pronounce every letter, saying for instance "s-p-r-u-l s-k-u," which nowadays they would pronounce ṭulku (a slight trill of an "r" following the initial "t" sound and with the "L" very softly articulated), approximating Central Tibetan pronunciation.

4. There is one very useful three-volume anthology of close to 200 *kāvya*-style Tibetan compositions (Blo-bzang-chos-grags 1988), all the more useful for being chronologically arranged. Although not comprehensive, it does allow an overview of many or even most of the main texts that ought to be considered in a more ambitious study than I can offer here. It often helpfully supplies footnote explanations of the words and images least likely to be understood by modern-day Tibetans. For further comments on this publication, see Kapstein 2003, 789.

5. The first work is the Buddhacarita Mahākāvya (*Sangs-rgyas-kyi spyod-pa zhes bya-ba'i snyan-dngags chen-po*), Tôhoku no. 4156 (Derge Tanjur, vol. GE [172], fols. 1v.1–103v.2), translated by Sa-dbang-bzang-po [Mahīndrabhadra] and Blo-gros-rgyal-po [that is, Mdo-smad-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-po]. The Tibetan translation, made in around 1270 CE, has 28 chapters, while the

the first or second century, and hymns by Mātṛceṭa composed soon after. As a general rule in India, *kāvya* was produced for royal patrons, or at least with hopes of benefiting from royal largesse. The authors were overwhelmingly Brahmins. Even Buddhist *kāvya* writers were, with some exceptions, Brahmins who had converted. In the Buddhist case, some of these works might not have been supported by royal patrons, but rather had the aim of being consumed by the royal court, perhaps with the idea of influencing them to convert to Buddhism. We will note now and then, in passing, that much of the *kāvya*-style literature in Tibet, whether translated from Indian sources or freshly composed in Tibet, was in some degree sponsored by ruling powers.[6]

There have been precious few publications about literary aspects of Tibetan studies, and most of the little there is will be found scattered here and there.[7] Literature as such does not fill the cultural niche that the academy reserves for Tibet. In the United States in particular, positions in Tibetan studies are usually located in religious studies departments. Only two general surveys of Tibet's *kāvya*-style literary culture have been published in English or any European language, and these only recently. Quite apart from, and in contrast to, these exemplary works by professors Matthew Kapstein and Leonard van der Kuijp,[8]

available Sanskrit text ends in the middle of Chapter 14. There have been numerous studies and translations of this text which will not be listed here, since ample bibliographical references may be found in Jackson 1997. For the latest translation, limited to the surviving chapters in Sanskrit, see Olivelle 2008. The second work is the *Saundarananda Mahākāvya*, which was translated into Tibetan only in recent years (Aśvaghoṣa 1999).

6. For a fine essay addressing precisely this issue, see Verhagen 1992.

7. The main problem with this statement is the existence of the admirably exceptional school that has formed around Michael Hahn and his associates, centered at Marburg, Germany. But even in this case, while many relevant works may be found in Hahn's series published by Indica et Tibetica Verlag, much of the other material is scattered here and there, in Indian journals that may not be widely available elsewhere, or in dissertations not yet published.

8. Van der Kuijp 1996 and Kapstein 2003, to which we might add the unpublished seminar paper by E. Gene Smith, quite difficult to obtain, to be mentioned presently. Of the two published surveys, Kapstein's is the more accessible and extensive in its coverage, even while van der Kuijp's is still indispensable. Also quite relevant, although only in small part on *kāvya*, is Jackson 1996. There have been some very significant early studies by E. Gene Smith, including both Smith 2001 (a collection of his studies done in the 1960s–80s) and a still-unpublished seminar paper (Smith 1964). Further sources of information relevant to the influence of Daṇḍin on Tibetan literature will be given later on. I cannot claim to displace the importance of any of these previous works; I have a somewhat different emphasis, bring forward a few under- or un-utilized sources, state things in my own way, and draw my own conclusions, even if not especially or entirely original. I am aware that in very recent years some fairly large histories of Tibetan literature have been published in Tibetan language by Tibetan authors, but I have not made use of them. I have at my disposal

we might quote from the late Rolf Stein's chapter in his book *Tibetan Civilization*, where he said something rather characteristic of the attitudes of many other Tibetanists, then and now, especially those who are not particularly Indologically inclined. Stein writes about the more than 300 volumes of Buddhist scriptures (the Kanjur) and scripture-based treatises (the Tanjur) that were—with only a very few significant exceptions from Chinese and Khotanese—translated from Indic languages:

> These texts are nearly all translated from Sanskrit and couched in an artificial language closely modeled on the Sanskrit original, not only as regards vocabulary but even in its syntax... We need not, therefore, concern ourselves with literature which has nothing specifically Tibetan about it.

This statement shows clearly Stein's unwillingness (and as a Sinologist-Tibetologist, his apparent inability) to go back to Indian sources. Later on he says, only this time not about translation literature but about works composed by Tibetans:

> Numerous works, on the other hand—even chronicles and biographies—are written in an ornate, flowery style, modeled on the Indian *alaṃkāra*. Although this style certainly strikes us as turgid, and its ponderous tone and lengthy sentences are the translator's despair, it possesses a stylistic refinement which is undoubtedly much appreciated by the Tibetans.[9]

These are just the sort of stylistic complaints that foreign scholars have so often made about Indian *kāvya*. Of course, if the Tibetan product really is all that derivative, it cannot be so very original and interesting, and we are left clueless why (any, let alone "the") Tibetans would so undoubtedly appreciate it. And if it is so much appreciated by Tibetans, surely this fact ought to be appreciated by Tibetologists. Not only Stein, who besides being Sinologically oriented always had a special and rather unusually strong and commendable interest in "popular" and non-elitist aspects of Tibetan culture, but among Tibetans, too, some have held conflicting or ambivalent views about the value of *kāvya* in and of itself.

only the one by Dge-'dun-rab-gsal 2001. Although only a little over 250 pages in length, it makes a good attempt to cover the entire historical range of Tibetan literary works, at the same time giving a fair amount of attention to individual titles and their authors, and so I think it ought to be recommended.

9. Please note that these comments (Stein 1972, 250–52) are part of what was probably the best discussion of Tibetan poetry at the time it was written, and remains significant today for its examples and discussions of Old Tibetan and folk poetry (196–97, 248–81).

First, some positive evaluations, although in these contexts the author, Bod Mkhas-pa, is apparently anticipating some of the same sorts of objections to *kāvya* that had already been voiced in the past. In the early pages of Bod Mkhas-pa's commentary on Daṇḍin, he cites Chos-rje Rgya-ras-pa's *Teaching Cycle on Interdependent Origination* (*Rten-'brel-gyi Chos-skor*), which says:

> Although meditating hermits may not have the opportunity to accomplish extensive learning, still they must respect all the knowable objects and the ones who make them known. They should rejoice in their successes. Starting with the [lowliest] blacksmiths, they should borrow the hammer, hold it in their hands, and make a prayer of aspiration, "May I become skillful even in such things."

Note, too, Bod Mkhas-pa's own comment:

> All the scriptures related to inner science (Buddhism) are existing exclusively in the form of poetry (*snyan-ngag, kāvya*). All the other sciences make use of it, so that it is like the iris of the eye for seeing all knowables.[10]

We might contrast this to Rten-ne's comments on *kāvya* in his lengthy commentary contained in the mid-thirteenth-century manuscript of the *Zhi-byed Collection*. Here *kāvya* treatises are one of a number of types of treatises (*śāstra*) deemed useless from a spiritual perspective:

> "In the hands of the pundits are many unhelpful teachings," it says. Among these are human, horse, and elephant judging, *śāstra*s on stances, judging debates and so forth. Also, judging crows' teeth, physical exercise, *kāvya* of worldly people and many other things which are unnecessary, even if there are many who make as if there were some need for them.[11]

10. Bod Mkhas-pa 1972: folios 7 and 11. The first quote Bod Mkhas-pa took from a text by Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras-pa Ye-shes-rdo-rje (1161–1211 CE) on the spiritual and esoteric dimensions of the universally Buddhist idea of interdependent origination (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*). Several volumes of texts belonging to this general cycle, important to the early 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa school, have been published, but I have so far been unable to trace this particular citation in them.

11. *Zhi-byed Collection* 1979, V 423. This collection continued to develop throughout the twelfth and the first decade of the thirteenth century, expanding around a core of Indian texts brought to (or [re-]produced in?) Tibet by Phadampa (d. 1117). I have argued for the dating of the manuscript as a whole, and Rten-ne's authorship of this particular commentary, in another place (these conclusions are, admittedly, far from obvious). For an explanation of the Indic phrase *kākadanta*, still current among Tibetans in the expression that means "judging crows' teeth," see Gyatso 1997, 161, 169. A use of it by Abhinavagupta is noted in Masson 1972, 35.

This was probably written around the year 1200, by Rten-ne, a holder of a lineage of the Andhra-born Buddhist teacher known as Phadampa (d. 1117 CE).[12] Phadampa himself never spoke without employing poetic metaphors or other types of enigmatic or symbolic language. An earlier person in Rten-ne's lineage even composed a work disentangling the *upamās* used by Phadampa (many of these poetic images are also found in the preserved collections of "free-standing" [*muktaka*] verses by Phadampa's 54 Indian teachers, which may be among the earliest multi-authored anthologies of this kind).[13] But here Rten-ne is not objecting to poetic expression (or compositions) *per se*, only to *kāvya* of the secular kind, which would not, *in itself*, be conducive to religious goals. It is perhaps good to keep in mind that not only modern cosmopolitan Tibetologists, but some early Tibetans as well, have had ambivalent attitudes about *kāvya*. I would venture to say that in the past in Tibet, perhaps even much more so than in India, *kāvya* was roughly as popular as Italian opera is in the US to the proverbial "man-in-the-street." There seems to have been an intermittent tension between those ready to admit *kāvya*'s choreography of signs in the service of beauty and charm as potentially self-sufficient, in need of no external justification, and those who could only appreciate this kind of verbal display as one possible means to further some higher, almost inevitably Buddhist, idea or aim.

Since Daṇḍin for many centuries was "the" source (directly and indirectly) for theories about *kāvya* and composition in general,[14] he himself became a contested figure for Tibetans. Many longed to see in him and his work

12. The name by which he is best known to Tibetans of the last five or more centuries is Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas, which could be translated as "Father Holy Buddha." Clearly, this is an epithet, and not a proper name. Kamalaśrī is his most usual Indian name (a monastic ordination name), although there are still others. His immediate disciples in Ding-ri most commonly addressed him simply as Dam-pa ("Holy One").

13. Schaeffer, 2007 offers arguments for this. One ought to consider other possibly still-earlier anthologies, such as those listed in Bhattacharji 1995, 139–40.

14. From one perspective, Tibet would seem to have missed out on the rich developments of poetic theory that occurred in India after Daṇḍin. Some other *alaṅkāra* treatises were known and referred to in Tibetan literature, and some manuscripts were preserved in Tibetan monasteries, but it is nevertheless true that Daṇḍin was the single poetics textbook for Tibetans, and further developments in Tibetan literary theory, until quite recently, grew out of discussions on it. Bhāmaha seems to have been known to Tibetans only *via* Daṇḍin's differences with him, as recorded in the commentaries on Daṇḍin's work (van der Kuijp 1986b). A manuscript of Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa* (composed in Kashmir in ca. 1050), complete in 73 wide folio pages, was found in Tibet, at Zha-lu Monastery, by Rahula Saṅkṛtyāyana and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (Dge-'dun-chos-'phel 1990, I 23). However, I know of no indication that Maṃmaṭa's work, destined to become perhaps the most widely used poetics textbook in India, had even the slightest influence in Tibet. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel comments, "This is nowadays in India the textbook everyone studies."

some trace, however small, of Buddhist identity. If it were only possible to see him as a Buddhist, his literary advice could meet with easier acceptance in a society so largely committed to Buddhism. Every Tibetan commentary on Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror* deals in its own way with this problem. Bod Mkhas-pa, after discussing briefly the problem of Daṇḍin's religious affiliation, concludes that he drew inspiration from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, and therefore it is not really possible to be sure about his religion. He cites a work by Śrīdharasena on the ways to draw portraits of the eighty[-four Mahā]siddhas. This text says, "Daṇḍin, yellow color, with female attendant."[15] The yellow color could suggest he was a wearer of Buddhist monastic robes, although the female attendant would for obvious reasons argue against it. He notes how some people say things like, "Slob-dpon Dpa'-bo [that is, Ācārya Śūra, or Āryaśūra] was known by this name [Daṇḍin] before he entered the Buddhist way." The opinion of Bod Mkhas-pa's own teacher was that in reality Daṇḍin was a non-Buddhist (a Tīrthika), that he belonged to the particular group that carried the trident. The name Daṇḍin could not possibly have been used by a monk, a *bhikṣu*, even if he were a convert. Bod Mkhas-pa expresses his disagreement with the practice of placing drawings of Daṇḍin in monastic garb on the title pages of commentaries. Clearly, even among *kāvya* students in Tibet, there was a great deal of discussion about Daṇḍin's usefulness to Buddhists, especially if he was, as seems to us today quite certain, not himself a Buddhist.[16]

15. Bod Mkhas-pa 1972, folio 12. The quote would have to be from Śrīsena's *Caturaśītisiddhābhisamaya* (*Grub-thob brgyad-bcu'i mngon-par rtogs-pa*), Tôhoku no. 4317 (Derge Tanjur, vol. NGO, folios 15v.6–17r.7). One doesn't really expect to find a figure named Daṇḍin numbered among the Mahāsiddhas, but in this particular work we do find the line about Dbyug-pa-ba (Daṇḍin, although in Tibetan the name is usually simply transliterated, or when translated, Dbyug-pa-can), at folio 16 *verso*, line 6.

16. One essential phase in the Buddhicization of Daṇḍin took place, no doubt, when the tenth-century Sinhalese Buddhist monk Ratnaśrījñāna composed his commentary on the *Kāvya Mirror*. This commentary, even though no translation was ever released to the Tibetan public, was known to a few Tibetans, employed by the translators of Daṇḍin's text and by its Tibetan commentators. Ratnaśrījñāna, after Daṇḍin himself, was very likely the second most important source of Tibetan knowledge of *kāvya* and its history. The content of his commentary was largely incorporated into the Tibetan commentarial tradition, and the Buddhist identity of the author surely facilitated this. Note in this connection how the colophon of the 1586 CE work of Rin-spungs-pa 1983, 525 suggests that among the many Indian commentaries, two were influential in Tibet—those of Ratnaśrī and Vāgīśvara. (Dragomir Dimitrov told me, in February 2005, that the latter name is a reconstructed form, based on the Tibetan Ngag-gi-dbang-phyug, that has not yet been encountered as such in the Indian texts, and his commentary appears to have been lost with but a few traces remaining in works by others).

B. Early *Kāvya* in Tibet: The Evidence of the *Stotra*s

To state briefly the history that we will go on to deal with in greater detail, Daṇḍin's work,[17] written in around the late seventh century,[18] was partially translated and paraphrased in the early thirteenth century by Sa-skya Paṇḍita[19] and completely translated for the first time in around 1270 by one named Shong-ston. It may be argued, although not entirely true, that Tibetans only began composing poetry in the full *kāvya* mode in the early fourteenth century (these early examples are all by followers of Shong-ston that have not yet been published, although they exist in manuscript form). However, it is not the case that Tibetan involvement with *kāvya* starts only with the translation of Daṇḍin. As Kapstein and others have already pointed out, Tibetan words had been coined for *kavi* (*snyan-ngag-mkhan*) and *kāvya* (*snyan-dngags*, often in more recent times spelled *snyan-ngag*) by the early ninth century,[20] and at the same time scholars translated some examples of *kāvya* literature, primarily but not exclusively in the form of *stotra*s and letters, among them works of Mātṛceta and Candragomin, as well as Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*. A catalog of translations made in the early ninth century includes a section of translated *stotra*s numbering 17 titles.[21] Of course,

17. For a general study of Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror*, including its translation into Tibetan, studies by Tibetan scholars, text editions paralleling the Sanskrit and Tibetan, together with German translation of its chapter one and so forth, see Dimitrov 2002. Chapter 2 has been studied in an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Eppling 1989) which I haven't yet been able to study in any detail. Chapter 3 of the Tibetan translation remained basically unstudied before a new publication by Dragomir Dimitrov was released in 2007.

18. The problems of dating have been discussed at length in Dimitrov 2002, 11–24. It appears that the date is "probable, however, not entirely proven" (Dimitrov in personal correspondence in February 2005).

19. For a major study of section three of this work by Sa-skya Paṇḍita, the *Mkhas-pa-la 'jug-pa'i sgo*, see Jackson 1987. For a study of the first two sections, the ones on literary composition and exposition, see Gold 2003.

20. It is probably significant, too, that this same text, the *Mahāvyutpatti*, has no section particularly devoted to poetic terminology, although it does have special sections for music, Sanskrit grammar, and so forth. It is true that some terms of composition are included in a more general listing of words concerning expressions both spoken and written (nos. 1430–77), and among these terms are the basic forms of composition, words for 'meter' (including only one term for a specific meter, the one known as *daṇḍaka*—in Tibetan, *rgyun-chags*—on which see van der Kuijp 1986a). Still, we look in vain for any specific names of *alaṅkāra*s. Even some of the basic vocabulary items of *alaṅkāraśāstra*, like *rasa, anubhāva* or *vibhāva*, are either missing or, when found, listed among non-literary terms.

21. For complete editions of this text often called the *Ldan-dkar-ma*, but more correctly *Lhan-dkar-ma*, see Yoshimura 1950 and Lalou 1953, besides which there have been a number of

some of these *stotra* translations have since been replaced by translations done later on. For the time being we will restrict ourselves to *stotra*s. Ignoring the epistles, for which there is a fine publication,[22] we will also ignore eighth- to ninth-century inscriptions, for even though there may be some moderately poetic images in them, I think there is no good reason to think they are written under *kāvya* inspiration.[23] Tibet had its own indigenous poetry, which continued even as Indian *kāvya* was going through a naturalization process, about which more presently.

Although Daṇḍin was among the earliest of the literary theorists, he *was* preceded by others, and some of the best-known exemplars of *kāvya* literature, particular the fourth-century works of Kālidāsa, had already been composed well before his time. I would argue, too, that the influence of Indian *kāvya* was starting to be felt in Tibet long before the translation of Daṇḍin's classic, and now I would like to say more on this issue. This might seem too obvious to constitute an issue. After all, prescriptive texts would not have been truly necessary if there had been sufficient exemplars of actual *kāvya* at hand. Well, that "is" my point exactly.

For economy of words, we will focus on a single *stotra* to Sarasvatī, then go on to mention a few others briefly. Sarasvatī is well known as the divine patron of all the verbal arts, so it is only fitting that She should be the central figure in some of the first *kāvya* translations. Bod Mkhas-pa, in his commentary on Daṇḍin's opening verse in praise of Sarasvatī, quotes from the *Praise of Sarasvatī* by the Brahmin Bṛhaspati, among other sources. A complete translation will be offered presently,[24] but first a brief explanation of the first verse, which must seem rather un-poetic and odd to most readers. After quoting the *Karaṇḍavyūha*

other studies that will not be listed here. Yet another imperial period catalog, also datable to somewhere during the first three decades of the eighth century, the *'Phang-thang-ma*, has only recently become available. See Halkias 2004. It lists about 223 more titles than the *Lhan-dkar-ma*.

22. Dietz 1984. Partially for reasons of economy, I have also excluded the "good sayings" or "fine expressions" (*subhāṣita* or, in Tibetan, *legs-bshad*) literature from consideration in this paper, although it is certainly an Indic literary genre and one to which Tibetans had their own original contributions to make (see especially Sternbach 1981, 105; Hahn 1984; van der Kuijp 1986, and references therein supplied).

23. For the epistles in Tibetan with German translations, see the just-mentioned work by Dietz 1984, and for the largely prosaic inscriptions, in both Tibetan and English translation, see Richardson 1985. Another place to look for early Indic *kāvya*-like influence might be in Tibetan knowledge of Indian epic literature (see Kapstein 2003, 758–62), although this, too, will not receive much attention here.

24. The translation is based solely on Brahmin Bṛhaspati (Bram-ze Phur-bu), *Brahmaputrīsarasvatīstotrasiddhivākyaprabhā* (*Tshangs-pa'i bu-mo Dbyangs-can-ma-la bstod-pas grub-pa ngag-gi 'od-zer*), Tôhoku no. 3698 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. MU, folios 329r.6–330v.4), translated by Sum-pa Lo-tsā-ba Dar-ma-yon-tan (who would most likely have been the translator of no. 3697 as well).

Sūtra for the story of the Hindu gods (the gods of the "other side") emerging from various parts of Avalokiteśvara's body, Bod Mkhas-pa makes the remarkably liberal comment:

> It is true that the *tantra* scriptures call Her a consort of Mañjuśrī, while in Her deeper aspect She is identical with that Mother of All Buddhas, Prajñāpāramitā. Still, since both insiders and outsiders take Her as the divine focus of their high aspirations, Her compassion doesn't take sides with one or the other, and so Her blessings are all the greater, and She is especially sublime.[25]

In the passage from the *Karaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* that Bod Mkhas-pa quotes, Avalokiteśvara foresees that in a future time there will be people who will not be tamed by the forms with Buddha and Bodhisattva appearances, but rather through the forms of non-Buddhist gods. So Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, sun, moon, and so on emerge from various parts of His body.[26] Note while reading the following verses that use is made of certain technical terms of *kāvya* poetics. The Sanskrit terms are placed in square brackets, so that Sanskritists will immediately recognize them.

> SPEECH RAY
> *Attainment through the Praise of the Daughter of Brahma, Sarasvatī.*
> Homage to Mañjughoṣa.
>
> Manifestly emanated from the tip of a canine tooth 1
> in the mouth of Avalokiteśvara, you
> wished to take into your care the other side
> with multiple forms of your compassion.
>
> So you, beautiful daughter of Brahma, 2
> your form conspicuously filled with emotional expression [vibhāva],
> with Viṣṇu's shape, you hold the *vīṇā*
> with a style that's delightful.
>
> Your playful acting [krīḍā or līlā] arouses love [anurāga]. 3
> You seem to be just sixteen years old.

25. Bod Mkhas-pa 1972, fol. 20.

26. See Studholme 2002, 40, for the source in the *Sūtra* together with a translation. While Bod Mkhas-pa might seem to be especially open to Hindu religion, in fact he, like the *sūtra* passage he quotes, is rather with what could be called an "aggressive tolerance" placing Buddhist deities in a position of priority to the Hindu ones (*ergo* whatever is good about Hinduism comes from the Buddhas).

You love to play with the garlands of froth
on the shores of the watery treasury.

Whoever mentally recollects the accomplishments 4
in your truly praiseworthy life story,
Daughter of Gandharvas, will be granted
richness and power in speech.

I think of you and my two hands, 5
their hairs exceedingly trembling,
like a newly opening blossom
I join at the top of my head

with earnest veneration from my heart. 6
Your qualities cannot be comprehended.
Still, what little I know I offer in worship
with this compositional rosary.

Your body is like an ocean of milk, 7
like *kunda*, like the *kumud* bathed in moonlight
with a splendor that entirely surrounds you
in a rosary of pure white light.

The gods lose their minds; 8
with shouts of joy they keep praising you.
This being so, it goes without saying your clear-minded
devotee who believes in them will, too.

On a pure white lotus you sit. 9
On the tip of its waving anthers where there rests
a cushion made of the hare-bearing (moon),
your pose is one of upright alertness, a look of pride.

One face, two hands, and the melodious sounds 10
of the gandharva's *vīṇā* when [its strings] are stretched,
when you sing to its accompaniment
the three worlds and their myriad beings find satisfaction.

It's soft and supple, long and winding, 11
its color black as bees, your hair,
hanging down the back and down both sides,
slightly oiled and twisted up in a bun,

with a white flower garland to tie it with 12
and a moon ornament on top...

gold earrings dangling, pretty cheekbones,
a smiling face.

Your lower sari made of cloth from Kuñcalinda 13
with a bouquet pattern has the taste [*rasa*] of attractiveness.
You have garlands of *puṇḍarīka* flowers,
pendants, necklaces and chatelaines.

Your hands and feet have precious rosaries 14
threaded with the tinkling sounds (of tiny bells).
Your body any society of gods,
girls or *vidyādhara*s would find astounding.

Young goddess, with the attractiveness of youth, 15
you rob all beings of their senses.
Beautifully smiling eyes you have,
their corners long and curved,

eyebrows with a fluttering dance. 16
In return for my constant remembrance of your body,
take me in your care and look
upon me with the flavor [*rasa*] of delight.

Slowly and carefully you go about your business 17
and speak in the truthful way you do.
Meanwhile your child who always praises you
is needing to drink the milk of your breasts

which has the scent of *mālisarpa*. 18
With a touch the milk of happiness begins to flow
and you console the weeper who is almost
entirely worn out from the heart.

You flatter your child's mind 19
while you make all sorts of incoherent sounds,
words of ridicule mixed in.
In your own mind it may be over,

but in my mind it's nothing but the badness 20
of your child that its mother must be
patient with and once again take very good
care of her child with her love.

From the rosary of stamens in 21
the white eight-petalled lotus of the heart,

from the spaces in between their lovely reds and
yellows, a latticework of light rises up.

On the soft tip of the pistil 22
the cool-rayed moon is consecrated
and in its center, with the color of water crystal,
a circle of *hrīṃ*s vanquishes the two obscurations.

On each of its petals, two by two, 23
sit the letters for the vowels: *a, ā*, and so on.
Slowly it starts revolving to the right
and becomes like a burning rosary of lamps.

It takes on the shape of a (mountain) peak 24
with ornaments that emanate rays all around.
May it clear away the dark defilements of my mind
and grant the supreme intelligence.

With a bit of the tiniest measurement, 25
the size of a hair, of a light ray of my life force,
may my [so small] effort be quickly repaid
by touching the goddess's heart.

When the second wheel revolves 26
it has a cloud of offerings of the seven kinds.
My thoughts, riding on the wind that enters in,
(she) makes grow into Full Knowledge. To her I bow.

Then the garland of *hrīṃ* syllables, 27
like a necklace of pearls,
only revolving like a whirling firebrand,
is expelled through the mouth

and then injected into the *maṇḍala* of the navel. 28
Once more the seed (syllables) blaze at the tips
of the heating (solar) rays and I take your feet,
Sarasvatī the speech-granter, on the top of my head.

If someone who likes to keep things in good order, 29
who avoids lies, has given up the food of *bhūta* spirits,
keeps celibacy and the special practice vows
were to each day recollect the Goddess, invoke the Mother,

then with a laugh that says, 'Well, which mastery of speech 30
do you desire?' she will pass out the accomplishments

as if it were a festival of foods
made from the three whites: milk, yoghurt and butter.

Whoever takes such praise of you seriously 31
will have all kinds of talents offered to them,
they will quickly understand the true meanings
of all the systems of knowledge and reasoning.

The lamps of the treatises will clear away the dark 32
ignorance of beings of the three worlds.
May they have attainments like
the Lord of Victors Amitāyus.

This is what the hosts of eminent persons, 33
both saints and scholars, teach.
Those like myself who have shrunken, keep
blabbering nonsense, and just don't know how?

They must follow you. This echo-like emphasis 34
on composition, for getting used to the meanings of
words, not just once, but many times,
is appropriate for a praise.

Whoever may see these words or learn or constantly 35
remember, read, recite, contemplate and
penetrate, write out, or even explain
them in detail to others,

May Glorious Sarasvatī quickly enter their thought and speech.

This work entitled "SPEECH RAY: Attainment through the Praise of the Daughter of Brahma, Sarasvatī," was written by the Brahmin Bṛhaspati with the personal blessing of the Goddess Herself.

If on first reading, this did not make very much sense, I recommend re-reading it while bearing in mind its main parts. The first part (verses 1–16), quite characteristic of *stotra*-praises in general, describes the body of Sarasvatī in loving detail, intended to evoke a clear mental image and arouse veneration. The following verses (17–20) force a transition from the attractive young goddess to the very intensely personal, and I would say touchingly imaginative, image of one's own mother before entering into (in verses 21–28) a guided visualization practice, a *sādhana*, ending with an account of the benefits to be derived from such a practice (verses 29–35).[27] The *sādhana* sequence in particular is

27. Wayman 1977 supplies a succinct account of Sarasvatī's various *sādhana*s as well as her iconography.

somewhat unusual, but it can largely be explained as a brief form of the already brief *sādhana* practice that appears in the text by the same author that immediately precedes this one in the Tanjur.[28] Except for the mention of Amitāyus, Buddha of Unending Light, in verse 32, and of course the borrowing from the *Sūtra* in verse 1 (and perhaps the "two obscurations" in verse 22), one might wonder what is especially Buddhist about it. Yet we may view the author as a great supporter of Buddhist monasteries in eastern India, since his name surfaces as such a number of times in Tāranātha's celebrated history of Indian Buddhism.[29] I am unable to feel certain about a date for this Bṛhaspati, but his association with Buddhapakṣa, a king based in Vārāṇasī during the period of the Candra kings, would appear to place him in the third or fourth century.[30] Assuming our author Brahmin Bṛhaspati is the same as the monastic patron Brahmin Bṛhaspati, which may be just that, an assumption, this would be a remarkably early *sādhana* text (although its very earliness could explain its anomalous features). Since the Tibetan translator of our text, Sum-pa Lo-tsā-ba, was active in the last decades of the twelfth century, for present we can only say with great certainty that the text was written sometime before that. Indeed, the relative simplicity of the poetic devices, belied somewhat by the poet's use of some basic technical terms like *rasa*[31] and *vibhāva*, could in itself be a sign of its age. No doubt future research, which will have to include the Sanskrit text[32] of this intriguing literary

28. Bṛhaspati, *Sarasvatīsādhana* (*Dbyangs-can-ma'i sgrub-thabs*), Tôhoku no. 3697 (Derge Tanjur, vol. MU, folios 329r.2–329r.6).

29. For four mentions of a Brahmin Bṛhaspati, see Chimpa 1990, p. 17 (included in a list of great Brahmins who worked for Buddhism), p. 142 (active in the reconstruction, after a major fire, of Nalendra Monastery under King Buddhapakṣa), p. 144 (King Buddhapakṣa's minister built a temple named Devagiri on a hill near the ocean in Bengal; Brahmin Bṛhaspati equipped it with all the articles of worship), and pp. 147–48 (he built many Buddhist temples in the city of *Kaṭaka in Oḍiviśa [Cuttack in Orissa] and arranged for the entertainment of a large number of monks).

30. A passage in Chimpa 1990, 155, also suggests that Buddhapakṣa was a slightly senior contemporary of Asaṅga, who is usually placed in the fourth or fifth centuries.

31. Notice that at least five Tibetan words have been used to translate Sanskrit *rasa* in its various contexts: [1] *ro*, meaning "taste" or "flavor," [2] *dngul-chu*, meaning "quicksilver," [3] *bcud*, "nutritive essence," [4] *ngang*, "continuing state," and [5] *nyams*, "experience" (and still other meanings; see the excellent discussion in Gyatso 1999, 117–21, where the use of *nyams* as a technical term in poetics is, however, not mentioned). In poetics contexts, *rasa* is generally translated with *nyams*.

32. I have noticed, in an on-line catalogue of the collection of the Asha Saphu Kuthi (Kathmandu), the following entry: "Hindū tutaḥ [no.] 0662: Pt. 1, Sarasvatī stotra, Bṛhaspati kṛta," and it would seem there is yet another copy with the number 0844. The "Hindū" classification may well be mistaken, since from the author's name and the title alone it would be impossible to know. It is possible that this text has been published in some anthology of Buddhist (or Hindu) *stotra*s, although I have not learned of it.

piece, will bring some answers to the questions that must remain for the time being.

I will refrain from giving more lengthy examples in translation, but I would still like to mention a few literary works that could help demonstrate early Tibetan knowledge of *kāvya* quite apart from the reading of Daṇḍin. If Bṛhaspati's poem is relatively simple in terms of *kāvya* poetics, the opposite is true of a work by Vajradeva (aka Vajradatta). This was translated by the same team that translated Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror*, and therefore in the vicinity of 1270.[33] An edition (which by now could be updated with still more manuscript witnesses) has long ago been published, including Sanskrit and Tibetan texts with a French translation.[34] However, only the original Sanskrit can fully display its high degree of literary art, with its very intensive use of alliteration and *yamaka*s, and its employment throughout of the classic *sragdharā* meter. Since Vajradeva was a contemporary of King Devapāla, he would appear to date to the first half of the ninth century. Everything that we think we know about his life is derived from one passage of Tāranātha's history:

Now about Vajradeva. He was a householder and by profession a highly successful bard. He went to Nepal and came across a degraded *tīrthika yoginī* with many perverse practices. He wrote a poem deriding her. By her curse, he was afflicted with leprosy. He prayed to Ārya Avalokiteśvara and composed each day a verse of praise in *sragdharā* meter. Thus in about three months he received the vision of Ārya Avalokiteśvara, got cured of the disease and his poem, which

33. *Lokeśvaraśatakastotra* (*'Jig-rten dbang-phyug-gi bstod-pa brgya-pa*), Tôhoku no. 2728 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. NU, folios 96v.4–107r.7), translated by Lakṣmīkara and Shong-ston. I assume for the moment that Vajradatta and Vajradeva are completely equivalent names for the same person, although this requires more study. I was thinking that perhaps the form Vajradatta is more authentically old, but in 1987 a land grant for building a monastery named Nandadīrghika Vihāra was uncovered at a site known today as Jagjivanpur in northern Bengal. It bears the name of the monastery's founder, a general by the name of Vajradeva. The land grant dates to the seventh year in the reign of Mahendrapāla, son and successor to Devapāla, which is reckoned to be 854 CE. For more information, see Sengupta 1999. The land grant itself has been "published" on a website (www.tathyabangla.org.in/public/i_cadeprt/archeology/arch3.asp; accessed on 12 January 2010). I think it is entirely possible that the general and monastery founder are one and the same person as the leper and the poet.

34. Karpeles 1919. At least nine Sanskrit manuscripts are available now. Even more interestingly, there exists a commentary by one named Dharmarāja, listed in the form of a 61-folio Nepalese manuscript long ago in Hara Prasad Shāstri 1917, 58, no. 55. Two further manuscripts, both in 25 folios, are listed in Moriguchi 1989, 110.

consisted of about a hundred verses, remained everywhere in Āryadeśa as a model of excellent poetry.[35]

If I might attempt a tentative translation of verse number 57, relying now on the Sanskrit and now on the Tibetan, it would seem, although it is difficult to be sure, that this verse among others might lie behind the biographical account (meaning that the "biography" might have evolved as a way of explaining the poetry). I have tried to give a sense of the bold alliteration, although reproducing the *yamaka*-type sound-echoes and the meter proves beyond my capabilities:

> Trembling with torment, close to collapse, its courage grown weak through the wrath of the wicked,
> [my] body is bound up with diseases of many different sorts, firmly besieged by sharp pains difficult to endure.
> You give rise to exceptional joy by holding the nourishing nectar, in deep contemplation commanding abundant care.
> Wise ones, may He defend your thoughts that they not be subject to mental agony for the sake of awakening, He who has Buddha atop His head.

Among the other early translations of *kāvya*, perhaps most remarkable is another praise of Sarasvatī attributed to a native of south India named Paṇḍita Kālidāsa. There does not seem to be any Sanskrit text available for this quite beautiful set of 15 verses, more beautiful I would say than that of Bṛhaspati, available in an English translation, not especially bad even if not done very well.[36] The Indian translator Jñānaśīla seems to be otherwise unknown, although the Tibetan translator Chos-'bar is fairly surely Rma-ban Chos-'bar, a very active translator who was born in 1044 and died in 1089 CE.[37]

35. Chimpa 1990, 271. The story has been retold several times, including Winternitz 1999, II 364, 377, and Krishnamachariar 1970, 330–31; the latter obviously read Chimpa's translation for himself rather than repeating what had already been said in earlier summaries. The Chimpa translation is a fine one, although I personally consider the translation "perverse" to be too strong ("wrong" would have been sufficient). Tīrthika is used in Buddhist works to refer to non-Buddhist Indian religions in general. Āryadeśa ('Phags-yul in Tibetan, "Country of Saints" or "Holy, Sublime Country") means India as a whole.

36. See Thomas 1903, which includes the Tibetan text in transliteration, based on a single textual witness. *Sarasvatīstotra* (*Lha-mo dbyangs-can-gyi bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 3704 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. MU, folios 344v.3–345v.7), translated by Jñānaśīla and Chos-'bar. It seems possible that here Jñānaśīla is a mistake for Jñānaśrī, a pundit invited to western Tibet by the King named 'Od-'bar in the eleventh century.

37. Rma-ban means *bande* of the Rma clan (in Tibet, *bande* is frequently used to refer to lay religious teachers; it may derive from Sanskrit *vandya*). Rma-ban was probably not a monk, and it

We also have a very nicely done work of praise entitled *With Blessings: A Praise of the Blessed and Sublime Mañjuśrī* by Candragomin, probably written sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries.[38] It was probably translated in the decades surrounding 1100 CE.

We should not end without mentioning one work still much admired by Tibetans, in one or another of its translations. This is the *Sragdharā Praise to Tārā* by Sarvajñāmitra.[39] A very fine and full English translation exists, and to it the interested reader is referred.[40]

In short, given these examples of *kāvya* in Tibetan translation (whether or not Sanskrit originals have been found for them), and for still other reasons to be given shortly, we cannot draw the line at 1270 or still earlier in the thirteenth century and say that before that time *kāvya* could have had no effect on Tibetan literature just because Daṇḍin had not been entirely translated yet. But for the moment, we should briefly consider what that Tibetan literature that would have been affected by Indian *kāvya* might have been.

C. Local Tibetan Poetry

I hope no one will entertain the impression that Tibet had no poetic compositions of its own. It surely did, perhaps even from the beginnings of writing.[41] Poetry during the early Tibetan empire may be characterized either as: 1) robust

is said that he formed a temporary relationship with Ma-cig Lab-sgron, the most famous woman spiritual leader Tibet ever produced.

38. *Bhagavadāryamañjuśrīsādhiṣṭhānastuti* (*Bcom-ldan-'das 'phags-pa 'jam-dpal-gyi bstod-pa byin-rlabs dang bcas-pa*), Tôhoku no. 2710 (Derge Tanjur, vol. NU, folios 77r.5–78v.4), translated by Sumatikīrti, Blo-ldan-shes-rab and Mar-pa Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug. Candragomin is of course a well-known figure in Indian literary history.

39. Three versions are contained in the Tanjur. The first, Tôhoku no. 1690, has the Tibetan title *Phreng-ba 'dzin-pa'i bstod-pa*. The second, Tôhoku no. 1691, *Me-tog phreng-'dzin-gyi bstod-pa*, was translated by Kanakavarma and Pa-tshab Nyi-ma-grags, and revised by Maṇikaśrījñāna and Chos-rje-dpal. The third, Tôhoku no. 1692, *'Phags-ma sgrol-ma'i me-tog phreng-ba 'dzin-pa'i bstod-pa*, was translated by Zla-ba-gzhon-nu. Only the second translation is roughly datable to the decades surrounding 1100 CE. Two Tibetan versions were edited together with the Sanskrit in Vidyabhusana 1908.

40. Willson 1996, 251–70.

41. The usual belief is that writing was introduced from India by the minister Thon-mi Sambhoṭa in the first half of the seventh century, during the reign of Emperor Srong-btsan-sgam-po (see the brief discussion in Beyer 1992, 40–41). However, there are quite a number of Tibetan-born scholars nowadays who lend their support to the claim of the Bon religion that the original Tibetan script was invented in Zhang-zhung, an ancient kingdom with its own language

and militant, even if not entirely lacking in the tender emotions, or as 2) didactic and/or moralistic. A heroic style similar to the first characterizes the Tibetan national epic of Gesar, recited by bards from memory or from direct inspiration until the present day. Although metaphors and similes certainly occur in Old Tibetan poetry, they do not recall stock Indian figures. I will only refer interested readers to a few publications in a footnote.[42] The absence of much or anything that is specifically *kāvya* continues to characterize much of the Tibetan Buddhist poetry through the end of the twelfth century, as for instance, the poems of Zhang G.yu-brag-pa (1123–1193), which range from the secular to the most sublimely spiritual, often, especially in his declining years, with a daringly *avant-garde* "beat" edge occasionally punctuated by something akin to scat singing.[43] The following sample, by no means typical, reflects one side of this many-sided poet. Its colloquial and manifestly boastful epic style, with parallel syntax in each and every verse, I think to be either a self-conscious homage to Old Tibetan poetry from the imperial period or a legitimate heritage of the same. It is titled *Zhal-pho-ma*, after the name of the place where it was written, Zhal-pho.

Prostrations to the Holy Lamas.

If you haven't trained a dog in its puppy years,
don't oppress it in later life with thatched fence and tether.
Known by the name Blue Mountain Dog,
he is floating today on the mountain meadows.

If you haven't trained a horse in its colt years,
don't oppress it in later life with saddles and bits.
Known by the name Little Kyang White Fur,[44]
he is floating today on the Pho-ma plateau.

in western Tibet, long before Thon-mi. In the beginning it would seem that writing was done on woodslips (*khram* or *khram-shing*, sometimes translated as "tally sticks"; many of these woodslips from imperial times have been preserved), although at some point in the mid-eighth century paper (*shog* or *shog-ser*) also began to be used for official documents (as demonstrated in Uebach 2008). The use of birch-bark, once a common writing material in Kashmir, was also known in early times. It is usually said that the oldest forms of record keeping in Tibet, before writing, made use of knotted cords and notched woodslips (see Laufer 1918 for further discussions).

42. Fedotoff 1998, Beyer 1992, 276–77 (with a sample from the Old Tibetan Chronicles), and Snellgrove and Richardson 1980: 59–63.

43. Martin 1996 and 2001. See also Sørensen and Hazod 2007.

44. Kyang (*rkyang*), sometimes spelled *kiang*, is the name for the breed of small wild asses that wander freely in the Northern Plateau (Byang-thang) and other parts of Tibet (Schaller 1998, 163–77, with illustrations).

If you haven't trained a yak in its calf years,
don't oppress it in later life with the yoke.
Known by the name Little 'Brong[45] Blue Horn,
he is floating today in the direction of Byang-kha.

If you haven't trained a bird in its fledgling years,
don't oppress it in later life with the feeder.
The name is Eagle King of Birds.
He floats today along the sides of Red Rock (Brag-dmar).

If you haven't trained a person in its childhood years,
don't oppress it in later life with the cheek-whip.
The name is Beggar Monk Zhang the Meditator.
He floats these days wandering the kingdoms of the world.
He's a *siddha*, not that anyone has noticed.[46]

Note that with each verse we move from the more to the less domesticated animal, with the author placing himself at the very peak of wildness, mobility, and freedom from social restraints. There is nothing here that especially recalls Indian poetry—and several markers of "Tibetanness" include the wild ass, wild yak, the cheek-whip, and the geographic locations—even if Indian Buddhism does surface in the initial line of homage and in the last verse with the words "meditator" and "*siddha*," *siddha* meaning a class of renunciates who find a paradoxical spiritual liberation by means of their worldly and often menial jobs. These verses of Zhang are offered here just to give an example, if not a typical example, of Tibetan poetry of the more non-*kāvya* kind. Perhaps it is true—I am not entirely sure about it—that this kind of poetry was more common before Daṇḍin's poetics started making inroads in the following century.

45. *'Brong* is the wild yak bull that, like the *kiang*, roams the Northern Plateau of Tibet. The "heart of the *'brong*" is proverbial for the ultimate in courage. The very idea that the *'brong* might be yoked is slightly preposterous. Even domesticated yaks would more likely serve as pack animals than draught animals. "The massive wild yak bull (*'brong*) is legendary for its immense power, and the human ability to capture or kill one has always been the measure of a hero" (Huber 2003, 36). The average weight of the wild yak bull is about 400 kilograms (see Schaller 1998, 125–42, with illustrations).

46. I have used four different versions of this text, although the only published version of which I am now aware is in Zhang 1972, 696. The word literally translated as "cheek whip" is *'gram-lcag*. As far as I know, this particular instrument of discipline and punishment is Tibetan, and not Indian. In more recent texts it is known by several similar words variously spelled: *skor-lcag* (or *skor-'chag*), *mkhur-lcag*, *ko-shag* (once misspelled as *ko-sha*), *ko-lcag*, and one variety made apparently of bamboo called *gnyug-lcab* (I think the more correct spelling is *smyug-lcag*).

D. *Kāvya*'s Tibetan Naturalization

I remember, over 25 and maybe 30 years ago, hearing a professor explain to his class that the songs of Milarepa (1040–1123 CE), well known for their richly poetic descriptions of natural phenomena and so forth, were completely Tibetan in their inspiration. This had to be true, he argued, because Daṇḍin had not yet been translated. At the same time, he did admit the possibility that the songs of Milarepa's teacher Marpa could have been slightly tinged by *kāvya* since he traveled to India several times.

A lot has changed in Tibetan studies since then. We now know that the biography and songs of Milarepa, as well as the biography (including songs) of Marpa, are best known to us from works compiled and composed in the sixteenth century. The main earlier collection for Milarepa's songs, done in around 1300, was made available in 1978 only to be widely but unjustly ignored.[47] Sources about him from before 1300 are quite laconic with very scant poetry. In fact, we can only with great difficulty come up with (and piece together) pre-fourteenth-century evidence as far as Milarepa is concerned.[48] In any case, Milarepa's songs are never called *kāvya*. They're called songs. So even though the question of whether these songs were influenced by *kāvya* might be an interesting one, we will just leave it in abeyance for now.

Instead, we may look at evidence for *kāvya* in Tibet starting in the beginning of the ninth century. This was a time when what may have been the most ambitious, single, continuous state-sponsored translation project in human history took place. Although at first relatively few Indian treatises were translated, by the middle of the ninth century, a very large percentage of the (overwhelmingly Indian) Buddhist scriptures that would come to compose the 100 or so volumes of the Kanjur had already been translated. It was at this time, too, that we may be sure that a Tibetan equivalent had been coined for the Sanskrit word *kāvya*. The Tibetan word *snyan-dngags*, which of course means very much what *kāvya* means, might be etymologically interpreted to mean "fine sounding expression."

47. And this earlier collection, called the *Mdzod-nag-ma* (Karma-pa III 1978), was made by Karma-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje (1284–1339), who is important for Tibetan *kāvya* history primarily for his *campū*-style retellings of *jātaka* stories. For the biography of Marpa, see Nālanda Translation Committee 1982.

48. Some of this early evidence will appear in a forthcoming book by Francis V. Tiso; for the time being one may consult his dissertation (Tiso 1989, especially its Chapter 7 dealing with literary aspects). Another very important study along these lines is Quintman 2006.

Buddhist scriptures certainly were translated in the early eighth,[49] if not already as tradition would have it, before the mid-seventh century. However, as far as *kāvya* is concerned, we can start in the early ninth. That is when the translation project took place under the orders and patronage of two Tibetan emperors. Most of these texts are listed in a catalogue compiled under imperial decree, the one we have already mentioned called the *Lhan-dkar-ma*. Among the significant *kāvya* works found there are some hymns of praise by such significant literary figures as Mātṛceṭa, Vararuci, and Triratnadāsa. There are poetic epistles by Mātṛceṭa, Candragomin, and others. But most significant of all is an over-all well done translation of the collection of 34 stories about Buddha's former rebirths, the *Jātakamālā* by Āryaśūra.[50] This was written mainly in poetic prose that often slides in and out of verse in various meters. These early translations are all very Buddhist works. They even include praises to the Buddha by two converts from Shaivite Hinduism.[51] It is not at all clear, however, how much impact these *kāvya* works had on Tibetans. In imperial times there is hardly any indication that local Tibetan compositions were even slightly influenced by *kāvya*, but then again, Tibetan compositions with identifiable authors of that time are brief and few.

So, not to be slaves to strict chronology, let us speedily rush up to the years surrounding 1270 when *kāvya*, in both theory and practice, arguably began a

49. A Tibetan version of the *Śālistambhaka Sūtra* found by Aurel Stein at Endere has been fairly securely dated on archeological and other grounds to the earlier half of the eighth century. See Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani 2002, 187, 190–91 and the sources given there.

50. *Jātakamālā* (*Skyes-pa'i rabs-kyi rgyud*), Tôhoku no. 4150 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. HU, fols. 1–135), translated by Vidyākarasiṃha and Mañjuśrīvarma. There have been numerous texts, studies, and translations, which will not be listed here, although we must mention the fine English translation by Peter Khoroche 1989, and a major study of the text by Hanisch 2005. For a new translation, see Meiland 2009.

51. The first two of the following three works were translated during the early ninth century, while the third was translated in about 1000 CE. [1] Śaṅkarasvāmin, *Devātiśāyastotra* (*Lha-las phul-du byung-bar bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 1112 [and also no. 4563] (Derge Tanjur, Vol. KA, fols. 43–45), translated by Sarvajñādeva and Rin-chen-mchog. [2] Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin, *Viśeṣastava* (*Khyad-par-du 'phags-pa'i bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 1109 [and 4562] (Derge Tanjur, Vol. KA, fols. 1–4), translated by Sarvajñādeva and Rin-chen-mchog, revised by Dpal-brtsegs-rakṣita. [3] Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin, *Sarvajñāmaheśvarastotra* (*Thams-cad mkhyen-pa dbang-phyug chen-po'i bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 1111 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. KA, folios 42v.5–43v.3), translated by Jārandana [Jānardhana?] and Rin-chen-bzang-po. The first text by Śaṅkarasvāmin (in Tibetan translation of his name, Bde-byed-bdag-po) been studied and translated in Shastri 1990 and Hahn 2000. The second text by Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin (in Tibetan, Mtho-btsun-grub-rje) has been studied and translated in Jamspal 1966, Zwilling 1979, Negi 1985, and Schneider 1993 and 1997. The third text is the subject of Schneider 1995.

slow but steady blossoming in Tibet. Meanwhile, the Tibetan royal line split up in 842, after which the empire gradually fell apart. There ensued a period of disunity, politically speaking, and Tibet as we know it was only put completely back together again between 1240, when Sa-skya Paṇḍita involuntarily and no doubt wisely offered Tibet's submission to the imperial power of the Mongols,[52] and in 1260 when his nephew 'Phags-pa was said to have been granted temporal power over the thirteen myriarchies of Tibet. Tibet's status in those times is sometimes described as "vassalage," but at least starting in 'Phags-pa's time it might be described as independence with strings attached. At the time, Tibet was not actually occupied by the Mongolian army, but it was the threat of force that spelled success for the Mongols in those days in Tibet and elsewhere.

But before talking about the literary watershed event in around 1270, first we must take a short detour into the realms of knowledge in traditional Buddhist pedagogy, the "arts and sciences."[53] There are five major and five minor sciences: 1) craft, fine arts, and industry; 2) medicine; 3) language science (sound, word, and letter); this primarily includes matters that we would locate within grammar and linguistics, but also several subsidiary language arts; 4) logic and epistemology; and 5) inner science (meaning Buddhism, and of course Buddhist meditation and psychology). The third major science, language science, covers four, meaning all but the first, of the five minor sciences, which are: 1) astrosciences (including mathematics, astrology and astronomy); 2.) *kāvya* poetics; 3) metrics;[54] 4) *abhidhāna*, which means glossaries or "lexicography"; and 5) drama. Number 3 among the major sciences, and numbers 2 through 5 of the minor sciences, are the ones that concern us here.

52. One may find an English translation of the letter Sa-skya Paṇḍita wrote to Tibetans to convince them that submission was the right course to take in Tucci (1999, I 10–12). Although this letter was a sixteenth-century addition to the corpus of Sa-skya Paṇḍita's works (Jackson 1986), its authenticity is not therefore in especially extreme doubt. It just means that it had its literary transmission in a context distinct from that of Sa-paṇ's *Collected Works* (*Bka'-'bum*).

53. The sciences, often ordered differently by different authors, have been discussed a number of times. For a brief and more accessible example, see van der Kuijp 1996, 393. Some Buddhist works translated into Tibetan employ an 18-fold classification of sciences which was sometimes noticed, but not much used, by Tibetan authors. Regardless of how old the scheme of five sciences might be, it is certainly to be found in the fourth-century works of Asaṅga (*Yogācārabhūmi* in Derge Tanjur, Vol. TSHI, fol. 161), although the five minor sciences appear to be absent there, and the poetry of poets is compared, much to its disadvantage, with the Word of the Buddha (Derge Tanjur, Vol. ZHI, fols. 227, 244).

54. For studies of Tibetan metrics (including Indian metrics as known to Tibetan tradition), aside from the work of Michael Hahn mentioned later, and a relatively accessible summary in Hahn 1988, we might point to Beyer 1992, 408–23 and Poucha 1950, 1954.

Now, to speak of that watershed event, if we could put the accomplishments of Shong-ston in a nutshell, it was that for the first time the entire complex of language sciences—perhaps we could call it "philology" in one of its more richly pregnant and indubitably laudable senses (and not, as is often done, restricting its meaning to historical or comparative linguistics or critical text editing)—were brought together. We might need to qualify this a bit so as not to diminish Sa-skya Paṇḍita's prior accomplishments, but if we look at the list of translations Shong-ston did in association with the pundit Lakṣmīkara,[55] we may see that he translated not only Sanskrit grammatical works,[56] but also an important work of lexicography—the *Amara Treasury*[57] by the Buddhist Amarasiṃha; a work of metrics—the *Garland of Meters Praise*[58] by Jñānaśrīmitra; a drama—the *Nāgānanda*[59] by Harṣa; and of course Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror*.[60] He also translated some important works in *kāvya* style, the *Avadānakalpalatā*[61] by Kṣemendra and the *Hundred Verses of Praise to Lokeśvara* by Vajradeva that have already been mentioned. In effect, he brought together

55. On the problem of distinguishing this particular pundit from other (earlier) figures with identical or similar names, see Dimitrov 2000.

56. For a summary discussion of these grammatical works, see Smith 2001, 193–99, and for the full treatment, Verhagen 1994, 2001. As Smith points out, the only direct translation of a Sanskrit grammar into Tibetan prior to Shong-ston was that done by the western Tibetan king Zhi-ba-'od, in about the mid-to-late eleventh century—the commentary by Tāreśvara, student of Samādhibhadra, on the Kalāpa (Kātantra) grammatical system.

57. *Amarakoṣa* (*'Chi-ba med-pa'i mdzod*), Tôhoku no. 4299 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. SE, fols. 126–243), translated by Kīrticandra and Yar-lungs-pa Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan and revised by [the Tibetan] Dharmapālabhadra. Shong-ston's translation as such is no longer extant. There have been a very large number of editions of the Sanskrit. A technical point: according to the author's own rules, the correct spelling for the title of his work must be *Amarakoṣa*, and not *Amarakośa*.

58. *Vṛttamālāstuti* (*Sdeb-sbyor-gyi phreng-ba'i bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 4305 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. SE, fols. 379–89), partly translated by Shong-ston Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan and completed by Dpang Lo Blo-gros-brtan-pa. For a study, see Hahn 1971.

59. *Nāgānanda* (*Klu kun-tu dga'-ba zhes bya-ba'i zlos-gar*), Tôhoku no. 4154 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. U, fols. 225–52), translation completed at Sa-skya by Shong-ston Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan and Lakṣmīkara, at the behest of Dpon-chen Shākya-bzang-po. Note that the last-mentioned served as political leader (*dpon-chen*) of Tibet at the time. There have been many text editions and translations.

60. Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* (*Snyan-ngag-gi me-long*), Tôhoku no. 4301 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. SE, fols. 318–41), translated by Lakṣmīkara and Shong-ston.

61. *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (*Byang-chub-sems-dpa'i rtogs-pa brjod-pa dpag-bsam-gyi 'khri-shing*), Tôhoku no. 4155 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. KE, fols. 1–366, continued in Vol. KHE, fols. 1–329), translated by Lakṣmīkara and Shong-ston and revised by Chos-skyong-bzang-po. It is said that Kṣemendra completed the composition in 1052 CE (Winternitz 1999, II 282). The colophon to the Tibetan translation, which is quite lengthy and informative, has been studied in Meior 1992, 52–85.

the whole complex of language sciences necessary for producing and appreciating Indian *kāvya*, and these very works would remain paradigmatic throughout the later history of Tibetan philology. How did this interest come about?

One of the most famous Tibetan histories, the *Blue Annals*, has a short account of Shong-ston's life.[62] It tells how, during the ruler 'Phags-pa's earlier trip to Tibet, probably in 1265, Shong-ston composed verses in his praise and offered them to him while expressing his intention to study the art of translation. 'Phags-pa replied:

> It is good that you have this idea. It is difficult to develop the ability to translate new texts. While studying with the Indian pundits, you must question them thoroughly. As for me, my time with [my uncle Sa-skya Paṇḍita] was short, and I was unable to comprehend properly the works he composed, including the *Flower Bouquet of Poetic Meters*, and the *Mine of Words*. You should by all means gain a knowledge of these works.

After saying this, he gave Shong-ston those same books by his uncle together with five ounces of gold and ten bolts of silk. Thus equipped financially, Shong-ston went to the Nepal valley and studied for five years with the Newar pundit named Mahīndrabhadra. Incidentally, Shong-ston's travel companion, a monk native to eastern Tibet, would eventually translate together with Mahīndrabhadra the famous *kāvya* masterpiece by Aśvaghoṣa on the life of the Buddha, the *Buddhacarita*.[63] And 'Phags-pa's financial support surely continued. He later sent letters to both Shong-ston and the Brahmin Pundit Lakṣmīkara who worked together with him on most of his translations.[64] 'Phags-pa's letter to the Pundit, dated 1270, in which he apologized that Tibet could not offer a climate and a diet more suitable for him, was accompanied with a nugget of fine gold weighing

62. See 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976, 784–85, although my translation of the passage which follows differs somewhat. Even more significant, given its date, is the parallel account in Anonymous (1360: fols. 47–49).

63. Jackson 1997 supplies historical details surrounding the Tibetan translation and arguments for the patronage and dating of the translation. The Tibetan translator, named Mdo-smad-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-po, should not be identified with the physician Zur-mkhar Blo-gros-rgyal-po (d. 1509) as is done in Lozang Jamspal's introduction to Aśvaghoṣa (1999, xxi).

64. Shong-ston met Lakṣmīkara and invited him to Tibet while on a pilgrimage to the site of Buddha's Enlightenment at Bodhgāya. Lakṣmīkara composed some verses in Sanskrit in honor of 'Phags-pa: *Paramagurudharmarājastotra* (*Bla-ma dam-pa chos-kyi rgyal-po-la bstod-pa*), Tôhoku no. 1172 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. KA, fols. 250r.3–250v.2), translated by the author together with Shong-ston (transcribed in Meior 1992, 93–94). The Tibetan texts of 'Phags-pa's letters to Lakṣmīkara and to Shong-ston have been transcribed in Meior 1992, 91–2 (with summary of content on p. 53) and summarized by Dimitrov 2002, 43–44.

an ounce. In sum, Shong-ston mastered the five minor sciences, translating at least one complete work devoted to each of them. The *Blue Annals* says simply, "He fully instituted the traditions of grammar, *kāvya* and lexicography," or, as Giuseppe Tucci put it, he was "the founder of Tibetan rhetorics."[65]

Now, seeing how 'Phags-pa passed on the torch of Indian literary studies from his uncle to Shong-ston, before turning to Shong-ston's later legacy, we should turn backward and ask, what are these works by Sa-skya Paṇḍita, and what inspired *him* to go into the language sciences?

Sa-skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), in his *Mine of Words*, translated approximately one fourth of the lexicon by Amarasiṃha called the *Amarakoṣa*. In what is perhaps his most famous composition, the *Entrance Gate to Scholarship*, he translated and paraphrased large parts of Daṇḍin's *Kāvya Mirror*. He composed his own separate work on poetic meter, which was of course entirely based on his understanding of Indian works on the subject.[66]

Tibetan hagiographies like to say that Sa-skya Paṇḍita spoke Sanskrit immediately after he was born. They also tell how a Vedantist named Harinanda heard of his fame and came all the way from India to debate with him. This, they say, was the one and only time that a Tibetan defeated an Indian in a philosophical debate. When Sa-skya Paṇḍita is depicted in paintings, it is almost invariably this scene. He is shown making a characteristic debating gesture towards a diminutive Indian figure crouched and humbled nearby. As part of the pre-debate negotiations, of course, Harinanda had promised that in the event of his defeat he would convert to Buddhism. I do not know if any of this constitutes verifiable history.

What we can say with greater historical certainty (especially since we have evidence from his own words, and a biographical account written in around 1240 while he was still alive) is that, regardless of the fact that Sa-skya Paṇḍita never visited India or even Nepal, as a young man in his twenties he inhabited a very Indian atmosphere, and learned Sanskrit quite well, hence giving substance to the sobriquet Paṇḍita. This is all because of the arrival of the Kashmiri pundit Śākyaśrī in Tibet in 1204.[67] Sa-skya Paṇḍita and Śākyaśrī first met in

65. 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976, 785, although my translation differs slightly, and Tucci 1999, 135.

66. For more about works on language arts studied or composed by Sa-skya Paṇḍita, see Kapstein 2003, 778–82. For his arguments justifying philological disciplines (in particular, grammar) in the context of Buddhist thought, see Gold 2005. Since for Sa-skya Paṇḍita the main concern was to understand the contextual clues for comprehending the speech acts of the Buddha, and the Buddha's context was an Indian one, his intellectual Indianism would be a very natural and logical result, although I may be placing the cart before the horse here.

67. His full name is Śākyaśrībhadra, but Tibetans generally prefer the shorter form. He has been the subject of two rather recent studies: Jackson 1990 and van der Kuijp 1994.

that year and, in 1208, Śākyaśrī presided at his full monastic ordination. Śākyaśrī, we must add, did not arrive in Tibet alone. He came with a group of nine learned pundits from various parts of north India and Nepal, perhaps the only such South Asian group of comparable size to visit Tibet in those times.[68] Most commonly they were invited one at a time. So Sa-skya Paṇḍita had quite a number of Indian teachers who could influence and nourish his special interests in Sanskrit and related philological studies. We know in particular that he spent three years, between about 1205 and early 1208, studying Sanskrit language arts with pundit Sugataśrī, who had the title "Great Grammarian." After 1208, he spent a further six or so years studying with Śākyaśrī himself, and with a pundit from Nepal, Saṅghaśrī, among still others.[69] So, we may make two basic conclusions. One is that Sa-skya Paṇḍita, although responsible for very few and only partial translations, by composing works devoted to the main literary subjects laid the groundwork for the complete translations by Shongston. Another is that Sa-skya Paṇḍita was certainly inspired to take up Sanskrit language and literary study by his Indian teachers, especially Sugataśrī and Śākyaśrī. If we move a little further back in history, there is rather little to say about *kāvya* studies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, except that, as we

68. While it is true that Atiśa arrived in Tibet in 1042 CE with a fairly large entourage of Indians, they mostly acted as his servants and attendants, with the main exception being his nephew Dānaśrī, who remained in Tibet working on translation projects. Atiśa called this group his *sattra*. The Sanskrit word *sattra* refers to all the various functionaries needed to perform the Vedic fire ritual known as *homa* or *agnicayana*. Obviously he was using the term in an extended or metaphorical sense.

69. See Jackson 1987, I 26–27 and Stearns 2001, 158–69 for more on Sa-skya Paṇḍita's Sanskrit studies. In a letter in answer to questions from Chag Lo-tsā-ba, Sa-skya Paṇḍita himself stated that he studied with Sugataśrī the main texts on metrics, while with Saṅghaśrī he studied the *Kāvya Mirror* and the *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* [attributed to Bhoja], while some commentaries on the last-named work he studied with Dānaśīla (see Rhoton 2002, 220). It is not impossible that this Saṅghaśrī might be the person by the same name mentioned in Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, ciii. We might think he could be the same Saṅghaśrī, a Buddhist, who was defeated in debate by the Jaina scholar Akalaṅka (Granoff 1985, 461–62), but the story occurs in a late eleventh-century work. Active in around 1400, a translator of Snar-thang Monastery, one of the several revisers of the *Kāvya Mirror* translation, was called Dge-'dun-dpal, this being the Tibetan version of the name Saṅghaśrī, yet another instance of a Tibetan Sanskritist adopting a name of an earlier Indian or Tibetan member of the literary tradition—sometimes a source of confusion for us now, as it was in the past. Tibetan authors in general, but the members of the literary traditions in particular, felt free to sign their names in either Sanskritic forms (in Tibetan transliteration, of course) or in Tibetan. This, also, has created some confusion. Our assumption is that Tibetan names should be given in their Tibetan-language forms, names of Indians in their Indian-language forms. Tibetans did not share this assumption. The 'Tibetan' version of Tāranātha's name is Tā-ra-nā-tha, and the Tibetan-language translation of the name of this Tibet native is hardly ever encountered.

have seen, quite a few praises (and so on) in *kāvya* style were translated during those times.

Quite apart from those rather brief works of praise, we ought to mention the twelfth-century translation of Haribhaṭṭa's version of the *Jātakamālā*, written in a wonderfully descriptive style with careful and convincing characterizations. Its 35 stories, in mixed prose and verse, are fully preserved only in this Tibetan translation, although ten of the stories have been recently identified in Sanskrit manuscripts.[70] We know that the Tibetan translation was done in the twelfth century, since the Tibetan translator Steng-pa Lo-tsā-ba lived from 1107–1190, about 15 of those years in India. Alaṅkadeva (aka Alaṅkāradeva) had the Kashmiri grammarian Trilocana[71] as an ancestor. The two translators brought with them to Tibet many man-loads of Indian books and Alaṅkadeva lived out his remaining years in Tibet. It is interesting to note that some of the Sanskrit manuscripts that were preserved in Tibet bear, in Sanskrit, the ownership mark Śīlākara,[72] and we might note, too, that some Sanskrit manuscripts of Trilocana's works were preserved in Tibet, even if perhaps never translated.[73] To judge from verses by Trilocana in Vidyākara's verse anthology, he must have been a Buddhist,[74] even though his name could suggest he was a devotee of the "Three Eyed" Īśvara (generally meaning Śiva).

70. *Haribhaṭṭajātakamālā* (*Seng-ge-zhabs-'bring-pa'i skyes-pa rabs-kyi phreng-ba*), Tôhoku no. 4152 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. U [=169], fols. 1–197), translated in Tibet by Alaṅkadeva and Steng-pa Lo-tsā-ba Tshul-khrims-'byung-gnas-sbas-pa (although the latter had already worked on the translation in India with his teacher Alakakalaśa). Hahn (1980) argues for a date of composition earlier than 445 CE. Some of Haribhaṭṭa's stories have been edited, studied, and translated into German in a series of publications by Michael Hahn which will not be listed here. The informative preface and colophon of this text have long ago been translated into English, although not especially well (Thomas 1904). There are reports of at least one Sanskrit manuscript surviving until today in Tibet, which raises the hope of one day achieving a complete edition of the Sanskrit.

71. In Tibetan, Spyan-gsum-pa. I am assuming he is identical to Trilocanadāsa; in Tibetan, Spyan-gsum-'bangs. One Trilocana is known to Indian *kāvya* history as author of a no longer extant drama named *Pārthavijaya*, and Sternbach 1978, I 385 dates him to the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century. The grammarian and the dramatist are probably two separate persons. The poet who appears in the anthology may be the same as the grammarian, but less likely the same as the dramatist. The longer name for Steng-pa Lo-tsā-ba is Steng-pa Lo-tsā-ba Tshul-khrims-'byung-gnas.

72. This is but the Sanskritic version of the Tibetan name Tshul-khrims-'byung-gnas (see the preceding note).

73. For these details, see Dge-'dun-chos-'phel 1990, I 21, 24–26 and 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976, 1052–54.

74. Ingalls 1965, nos. 13, 14, 20, 167.

Here is a question that would seem worthy of further research: it is at least plausible that this Alaṅkadeva might be identical to a figure known in Indian sources as Alaṅkāra (aka Laṅkaka), active in around 1140, older brother of Maṅka, the student of Ruyyaka. This Alaṅkāra was himself known to be a poet, and during the first half of the twelfth century he served as a minister to the king of Kashmir.[75] Their names are similar enough, they were both from Kashmir, and the dating agrees, although these facts alone should not be deemed sufficient to securely establish their identity. More study is needed. If they did turn out to be the very same person, this would place our Alaṅkadeva in the august company of some of the main luminaries of Indian *kāvya* in those days.

Somewhat beside the point here, since it was never translated into Tibetan, in view of its importance for *kāvya* history I would nevertheless like to say something about the Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts of Vidyākara's *Subhāṣita-ratnakoṣa*.[76] This is widely considered to be the first known anthology of individual Sanskrit *kāvya* verses (*muktaka*), supplying authors' names for most of the verses. It was preserved for us in two complete manuscripts: the Tibet-preserved (Ngor Monastery) manuscript version made in around 1100, the Nepalese manuscript, made around 1120 or 1130 CE (but re-copied in 1710), and one further fragment (the one published by F. W. Thomas). The two main manuscripts being in quite bad condition, the verses often had to be reconstituted based on parallel verses in later anthologies (or in the larger works from which they were drawn). Although there is a possibility that the Ngor manuscript of Vidyākara's anthology could have been brought to Tibet by Steng-pa Lo-tsā-ba, there would seem, or perhaps *only* seem, to be good reasons to believe it was brought there by Śākyaśrī or another member of his group (the Bengali Vibhūticandra being one of the more likely candidates) in 1204. When Rahula Saṅkṛtyāyaṇa and Gendun Choephel (Dge-'dun-chos-'phel) located and photographed the manuscript in Tibet in the 1930s (it was then photographed once more by Giuseppe Tucci[77]) they believed, based on their reading of an

75. Among many possible sources of this information, see for example Krishnamachariar 1970, 176–77. The names of Maṅka's three brothers were Śṛṅgāra, Bhṛṅga, and Alaṃkāra. Alternatively there was a different Kashmiri *kāvya* figure of roughly the same time by the name of Alaka (son of Jayānaka). These discussions of the identities of Alaṅkadeva and his ancestor Trilocana, which owe much to consultation with Lawrence McCrea, must at this point be considered suggestive and not conclusive.

76. For the Sanskrit text edition, see Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, and for the English translation, Ingalls 1965.

77. Tucci 1986, 252–53. Although Tucci quickly discounts the idea, it nevertheless seems entirely plausible that the name Vidyākara could be explained as a shortened version of the name of a known person with a somewhat longer name. The main candidates would be Vidyākaraprabha,

"ownership" colophon, that it was by one Bhīmārjunasoma (the fragment of it that had been published under a conjectural title by F. W. Thomas in 1912 was lacking the colophon). The back cover of the Ngor manuscript contains a label with Tibetan titles of several works that were evidently bundled together as one package (and chances are they arrived in Tibet that way):

1. The *Vādanyāya* by Dharmakīrti (Tôhoku no. 4218).
2. The *Vinayakṣudraka* (Tôhoku no. 6).
3. The *Vādanyāya* together with the *Guhyasamāja Uttara Tantra* (that is, the final and 18th chapter of Tôhoku no. 442).
4. The *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (in the form of the Tibetan title *Legs-bshad rin-chen 'dzod*; in later orthography the last syllable must be spelled *mdzod*).[78]

Numbers 1 and 4, at least, were actually located at Ngor in the 1930s. The anthologist Vidyākara seems to have had some connection with Jagaddala Vihāra in Varendra (presently in Bangladesh), although it is doubtful that he was really the abbot.[79] Hardly anything else is known about him, except of course that he was a Buddhist as well as a broad-minded and well-read scholar of Sanskrit literature. Jagaddala Monastery was probably only in existence for a single century before it was destroyed by Turuṣka invaders shortly before Śākyaśrī came to Tibet.[80] In fact, Śākyaśrī left Vikramaśīla Monastery in Bihar when it was under attack, and fled to Jagaddala Monastery, where he perhaps first met Vibhūticandra. In any case Vibhūticandra and Śākyaśrī were both at

Vidyākaraśānti, and Vidyākarasiṃha. The first and third may be ruled out, since they were both actively working on translations in early ninth-century Tibet. This leaves only Vidyākaraśānti, but since hardly anything is known about him, apart from his authorship of a text on Buddhist logic, the *Tarkasopāna* (also preserved in Tibet but never translated), we will have to live with our doubts (Tucci 1986, 275–310).

78. Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xvi–xviii. Of course, since the Ngor Monastery was only founded in 1429, the Sanskrit manuscripts must have found their way there from some other place (they obviously could not have been deposited in Ngor before it had been founded).

79. Although this connection between Vidyākara and Jagaddala Monastery has become common knowledge in the literature, it needs to be freshly investigated, especially in light of the fact that Jagaddala Monastery is nowhere mentioned in the text of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*.

80. According to Dutt 1962, 377, it is certain that Jagaddala flourished during the time of King Rāmapāla—he reigned about 1077–1120—and it is likely it was founded by him. Dutt translates a quote from Sandhyākaranandin's *Rāmacarita* that mentions Jagaddala. (This *Rāmacarita* is a *kāvya* work in which the story of Rāma and the story of Rāmapāla are told simultaneously; for a discussion of this work, see Bronner 2010.) Jagaddala was located very close to, if not actually in, Rāmapāla's royal capital, and it was at Jagaddala that Rāmapāla was coronated. Perhaps for this reason Jagaddala is sometimes known as Rāja-jagaddala, or "Royal Jagaddala" (Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xxxvii).

Jagaddala. Both spent three years there before traveling to Tibet.[81] Even if the evidence may all be circumstantial—there is no direct statement to the effect to the best of my knowledge—I believe the likelihood is high that Vidyākara's verse anthology arrived in Tibet in 1204, brought by these monks fleeing the destruction of Jagaddala Monastery.

At this point, we should insert a brief mention of one very important translator belonging to the Sa-skya school by the name of Yar-lung-pa Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan.[82] He was responsible for the first complete translation of the *Amarakoṣa* that has survived (Shong-ston's earlier effort has disappeared). This translation was accomplished in the presence of the pundit Kīrticandra in the city of Kathmandu (the version in the Derge Tanjur underwent a still later revision). Under identical circumstances, he also translated Candragomin's play called *Joy for the World*.[83] In addition, although the colophon does not supply any details about where this translation was done or with whom, he translated Durgasiṃha's

81. See Stearns 1996, 129. Another member of Śākyaśrī's travel party, Dānaśīla (not to be confused with the ninth-century Indian resident in Tibet by the same name), had also been a monk at Jagaddala. Still another important inhabitant of Jagaddala Monastery was Mokṣākaragupta, known for his commentary on the *dohā* songs (Tôhoku no. 2258) and a work on logic, the *Tarkabhāṣā* (Tôhoku no. 4264). Muniśrībhadra, although a native of Magadha, lived as a monk and teacher at Jagaddala. The existing Sanskrit manuscript of his *Pañcakramaṭippanī* (Tôhoku no. 1813) was found bundled together with a paper manuscript copied by Vibhūticandra's own hand (see Jiang and Tomabechi 1996). We should also mention Śubhākaragupta, Śākyaśrī's teacher at Jagaddala (two of his works, both of a tantric nature and both translated by Dānaśīla, are preserved in the Tanjur—Tôhoku nos. 1582 and 2674). See the brief section on Jagaddala Monastery in Dutt 1962, 376–80.

82. He is often called Lo-tsā-ba Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, and very well might (but surely should not) be confused with the later Bo-dong-pa named Lo-chen Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, about whom more below. Although there were at least 30 significant figures in Tibetan history with the four-syllable "given" name Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, for our purposes it is essential to distinguish three different figures: [1] Rje-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216), an important "founding father" of the Sa-skya school (who made some significant early contributions to Tibetan *kāvya* poetics, even if they have not been considered here). [2] Yar Lo (or Yar-lung Lo-tsā-ba, or Yar-lung-pa) Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1242–1346). [3] Bo-dong Lo-tsā-ba (or Bo-dong Lo-chen) Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1352–1405), the nephew of Lo-chen Byang-chub-rtse-mo. One Kanjur colophon (Tôhoku no. 436) tells us that the work was translated at Sa-skya Monastery by one Shud-ke Lo-tsā-ba Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, together with a pundit named Vimalaśrī. If this Shud-ke Lo-tsā-ba was not identical to Yar Lo, they must have been contemporaries, since both worked on their translations with the pundit Vimalaśrī (aka Vimalaśrībhadra). I think Yar Lo and Shud-ke are the same person, at least for the time being.

83. Among Michael Hahn's several studies of this text, we may note his complete translation published in Hahn 1987. For a Tibetan text, see *Lokānandanāṭaka* (*'Jig-rten kun-tu dga'-ba'i zlos-gar*), Tôhoku no. 4153 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. U, fols. 197–225). Editions of the Sanskrit are numerous.

grammatical commentary on the *Kalāpa Sūtra*.[84] It is also significant enough to note that he translated Munidatta's Sanskrit commentary on the Apabhraṃśa-language *dohā* songs.[85] He composed a verse eulogy in homage to Sa-skya Paṇḍita, which makes no more than slight use of Indian literary devices.[86] Unfortunately, hardly any material is available about Yar-lung-pa's life, except that he had at least a brief association with a Kashmiri pundit named Bhūmiśrī.[87] So we may feel heartened that a biography has surfaced in Tibet, according to which (I have no present means of verifying this in any other source), he lived a rather unusually long life, from 1242 to 1346. When and if this biography becomes available, it will be possible to say more.[88]

Now we should go back to the time of Shong-ston's translation of Daṇḍin in around 1270 and start looking forward to the future. It is known that contemporaries of Shong-ston were the first to compose original Tibetan *kāvya* consciously following the guidelines set down by Daṇḍin.[89] Some of these works have survived, but have not yet been published. Tibetans continued to write in Daṇḍin-inspired *kāvya* genres from the thirteenth century until today. Indeed, nearly every writer during the last 700 years made some effort in this direction.

Now Shong-ston had a disciple, one not related by blood, named Dpang Lo, who not only studied Sanskrit with him, but went on to travel several times to Nepal. Dpang Lo translated a grammar work by Haribhadra and a work on metrics.[90] Starting with Dpang Lo, for several further generations, uncles taught

84. *Kalāpasūtravṛtti* (*Cha-bsags-kyi mdo'i 'grel-pa*), Tôhoku no. 4283 (Derge Tanjur, Vol. LE, folios 21v.1–31v.5).

85. Kvaerne 1986, especially pp. 20–22 on the Tibetan translator and his translation, deemed less than adequate in terms of accuracy. Kvaerne's work contains an edited text with English translation of the Apabhraṃśa verses, while the commentary itself on the verses is not translated; edited texts of both its Sanskrit and Tibetan versions are supplied.

86. See Jackson 1987, I 17 for the bibliographical details on this work.

87. 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976, 1047.

88. My thanks to E. Gene Smith (Tibetan Buddhism Resource Center, New York City) for supplying this information, as well as contributing much to the arguments for distinguishing the persons with the name Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, via electronic communications.

89. Leonard van der Kuijp 1996, 405 has identified unpublished manuscripts of two near contemporaries of Shong-ston who composed *kāvya* works. The two authors are Thar-pa-gling Lo-tsā-ba Nyi-ma-rgyal-mtshan and Lo-tsā-ba Mchog-ldan-legs-pa'i-blo-gros-dpung-rgyan-mdzes-pa'i-tog (a teacher of Dpang Lo, he is often called more simply Lo-tsā-ba Mchog-ldan).

90. Important biographical sources on Dpang Lo-tsā-ba Blo-gros-brtan-pa (1276–1342), who may also be called Blo-brtan III, are Wangdu and Diemberger 1996, 62–70; 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976, 785–87); Anonymous 1360, fol. 49; Diemberger et al. 1997, 21–23, 107–08. Tibetan historical tradition distinguishes four different persons with the given name Blo-gros-brtan-pa (Blo-brtan for short). They are, in chronological order: Blo-brtan I: The Indian Sthiramati,

Sanskrit to their nephews, while serving as abbots of the monasteries of Bo-dong E and Shel-dkar Chos-sde in western Tibet. This uncle-to-nephew abbatial succession was quite usual in those days, especially in the Sa-skya school, of which their Bo-dong lineage might be considered a part. Dpang Lo's nephew translated the famous poem by Kālidāsa, the *Meghadūta*, along with several works on grammar and metrics.[91] The latter had a nephew who was famous for teaching the five minor sciences, even though it is not recorded that he accomplished any translations or compositions in that area.[92] The latter had a nephew who, in the early fifteenth century, composed very lengthy works on Sanskrit grammar, poetics, metrics, and so forth. He composed one of the most demanding of *kāvya* genres, a *mahākāvya*, on the life of the Buddha together with a continuation of the *jātaka* stories, bringing the original number of 34 stories up to 160.[93] Most and perhaps all of these literary figures besides studying Sanskrit with their uncles also worked together with Indian pundits, most of them traveling at least once to Nepal or India.

This is a remarkable literary dynasty, and the works they studied and translated remained until the twentieth century the standard ones for Tibetans of a literary bent, but it would not be right to give the impression that they had the last word. In the fifteenth century, one Zhang-zhung-pa composed two rather short *kāvya* works, one of them styled a *mahākāvya* retelling the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and another on the life of a Tibetan, the Great Translator

disciple of Vasubandhu, Blo-gros-brtan-pa being simply the usual Tibetan translation of the name Sthiramati. Blo-brtan II: Shong (or Shong-ston, or Shong Lo-tsā-ba) Blo-gros-brtan-pa, younger brother of Shong-ston Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan. Blo-brtan III: Dpang Lo-tsā-ba Blo-gros-brtan-pa. Blo-brtan IV: Sne-thang Lo-tsā-ba Blo-gros-brtan-pa, who is known mainly for his commentary on the Abhidhāna work by Sa-skya Paṇḍita. Although not much is known about him, he lived in about the fifteenth century. My main authority for this way of distinguishing these four persons named Blo-brtan is Ngor-chen 1973, 345, which I could locate thanks to a reference in van der Kuijp 1983, 298, which in its turn could be located thanks to a reference in Dimitrov 2002, 52.

91. For biographical material on Lo-chen Byang-chub-rtse-mo (1303–80 or 1392), see Wangdu and Diemberger 1996, 70–72; 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba 1976: 787; I believe the dates given here are mistaken; Diemberger et al. 1997, 23–24, 108.

92. Biographies of Bo-dong Lo-chen Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1352–1405) are found in Wangdu and Diemberger 1996, 72–76; Bo-dong Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal 1970, 451–90; Diemberger et al. 1997, 24–25, 108. At age 30, he succeeded Dpang Lo as abbot of Bo-dong E. Although there are lists of his compositions on the subjects of philosophy, cosmology, monastic rules and tantra, none of them being as far as I know available today, not one single title would appear to belong to a literary genre, which is odd.

93. Biographies of Bo-dong Paṇ-chen Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1376–1451) are found in Wangdu and Diemberger 1996, 76–79; Diemberger et al. 1997, 25–32, 41–88, 108–110.

Rin-chen-bzang-po.[94] For the latter, Zhang-zhung-pa sometimes adhered closely to, and sometimes departed widely from, the classic biography of Rin-chen-bzang-po by his disciple Khyi-thang-pa. Just to give an example of both his "conservatism" (which here means simply leaving well enough alone) and his originality in a two-verse passage, I offer this one describing the Great Translator's less than triumphal entry into the royal fortress of Kashmir. Both biographies contain the following lines about the racial taunts of the Kashmiri children:

> At first troops of breast-milk drinkers
> swarmed around to welcome the lord,
> "Wow, look at this yellow man
> with no mustache, how weird!"

But Zhang-zhung-pa was responsible for adding the verse immediately following, incorporating two imaginative yet charmingly realistic lines of further description, immediately followed by two gnomic, but somehow conciliatory lines:

> They were making cymbal sounds with their palms;
> they were giggling and whirling their clothes.
> When it is found in the councils of the deathless gods
> the claw of the property-protector (dog) is worth venerating.

This is just one of many examples of Zhang-zhung-pa's originality that could be brought forward. It is very important to point out, since many would seem to deny it, that creativity and originality did occur with reasonable frequency in most *kāvya* in Tibetan poetry.

To continue our lightning-speed survey, we should at least mention Zha-lu Lo-tsā-ba Rin-chen-chos-skyong-bzang-po (1441–1527 or 1538), author and translator of quite a number of significant works on literary arts. In the sixteenth century, the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–82), who had a number of Indian pundits at his court,[95] composed his own commentary on Daṇḍin, illustrating it with

94. About half of Zhang-zhung-pa's biography of Rin-chen-bzang-po has now been translated in Martin 2008. As far as I know the only English-language samplings of his Rāmāyaṇa work are in Kapstein 2003, 783–85 and van der Kuijp 1996, 398. Of the two works by Zhang-zhung-pa mentioned here, it is his Rāmāyaṇa that pulls out all the *kāvya* stops, utilizing, to the extent Tibetan language permits, a wide range of Indian meters and figures of sound, not to mention figures of meaning.

95. On these pundits, see Lobsang Shastri 2002. Prominent among them were Gokul (or Gokulanāthamiśra) and his elder brother Balabhadra; two from Varaṇāsī by the names of Haribas and Jayada; the Brahmin Nando Danye from Prayag (Allahabad), the Sannyāsin Khemagiri, and a native of Mathurā named Nīlakaṇṭha.

verses of his own composition.[96] And there were still other major lights among the local Tibetan-born Sanskrit philologists, like Tāranātha (born in 1575), Si-tu Paṇ-chen (1700–1775), and finally Gendun Choephel in the first half of the twentieth century. Certainly there are a limited, yet significant, number of Tibetans who need to be included in a future more inclusive list of the world's Sanskritists and Indologists.[97]

It is only since the 1980s that some younger Tibetan poets have started to doubt the utility of Daṇḍin for their craft, seeking their models and inspirations elsewhere, especially but not exclusively in modern English poetry, a particular turning point generally associated with Dhondup Gyal, the rebellious poet and tragic hero of the emergent modernists.[98] Late twentieth-century Tibetan modernism, while an interesting issue, is not dealt with here, although I would argue that its study surely ought to include considerable attention to what came before.

Along with Tibetan interest in literary study went an uncommon concern with myths of non-Buddhist Indian gods. Part of the importance of the lexical works called *abhidhāna* (*mngon-brjod*) and their commentaries was in the guidance that they had to offer Tibetans through this less familiar terrain, telling the myths, providing Indic epithets for the gods, along with a range of stock *kāvya* metaphors. I would suggest that this literary interest in India's non-Buddhist culture is somewhat parallel to Renaissance Humanist literary interest in the myths of classical antiquity. At the risk of sounding like a universal-evolutionist, one could even say that in some ways Shong-ston could withstand a comparison with the somewhat later Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304–74).[99]

There are a number of different avenues, apart from the primarily historical (history of translations and compositions) approach taken here, for investigating Tibet's Indic literary culture. One might be a study of the systems of patronage for the literary arts, including literary translations; about this only a few hints have been offered here. One could address the ways Tibetans understood and

96. Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho 1996. Following Tucci 1957, many have expressed doubts about the Fifth Dalai Lama's personal mastery of Sanskrit, although I suggest that the matter merits further consideration. His knowledge and mastery of the kind of *kāvya* that was known to Tibetan tradition has to be considered as a separate, if related, issue. There certainly are *kāvya* passages in a number of His works, including His well-known political history of Tibet, and the same may be said for the works of His Regent (Sde-srid) Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, including the Regent's biographies of the Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lamas.

97. For Sanskrit study in classical China and Japan, see Yuyama 1993. By way of contrast with Tibet, it seems that pre-modern East Asian Buddhist Sanskrit studies do not evince an interest in Indic literary theory.

98. On the life and suicide of Dhondup Gyal (Ḋon-grub-rgyal, 1953–85 CE), see especially Stoddard 1994, Pema Bhum 1995, and Kapstein 2003, 791–94.

99. A rather similar comparison was made in Kapstein 2003, 776–77.

made use of Daṇḍin's literary ideas. The Tibetan realm might be compared to various South and South East Asian regional literary cultures, such as those of south India or Java. And of course Tibetan poetry might be studied and appreciated for its literary techniques, styles and values, with or without reference to anything outside itself.

So, to wrap up this too-short historical survey told without quoting nearly enough of the poetry, for which apologies would with justice be demanded—Tibetan writers in general were greatly inspired by a long-term trend of "Indianness" that centered on a particular line of transmission, basically the Bo-dong lineage, but one with turns and bumps and starts, and not an entirely smooth one. Still it was a vital tradition of Sanskrit scholarship, in which later figures, besides working on previously unstudied texts, built on, completed, and refined the works of their predecessors. If we were to go on to draw a more detailed historical flow-chart of Tibet's Indic philology, we would see it quickly branching off from the main Bo-dong line into every Tibetan religious school, with twigs and buds discernible in nearly every Tibetan composition. If there was an evolution, it would appear to have been in the gradual adaptation of Indian models to Tibetan literary purposes, visible above all in the increasing use of *kāvya*, primarily *campū*, styles in biographies, and then more specifically in biographies of Tibetan subjects.[100] We may perceive this progression starting from Tsongkhapa's biography of Sadāprarudita (a character in an Indian Buddhist scripture) to his biography of the 'Bri-gung saint (funeral memorial for a Tibetan),[101] to the biography of Lo-chen Rin-chen-bzang-po (a homage to a famous Tibetan of the past), and finally the biography of an early eighteenth-century political leader, Pho-lha-nas.[102] By this time, Indian-style poetry had

100. On Tibetan creative adaptations of Indian stories, a distinct but nevertheless closely related issue, see especially Roesler 2002. Indian stories are sometimes retold in ways that, in varying degrees, relocate the action in Tibet. On Tibetan biographies, and autobiographies in particular, see the discussion in Gyatso 1998, 6, 101–109. A study investigating the continuities, or lack of same, between the Indian *carita* (which would be *spyod-pa*, "course of behavior," in Tibetan) and the Tibetan *rnam-thar* (which would seem to translate Sanskrit *vimokṣa*, "liberation") genres is a major *desideratum*.

101. I will reserve comments on Tsongkhapa's knowledge of Sanskrit and his two main *kāvya* compositions for another occasion. For now, it may suffice to say that his teacher in these subjects did indeed belonged to the Bo-dong lineage.

102. The author of this work, Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung, deserves a very prominent place in the more recent history of Tibet's Sanskrit philology, not only for his 1733 *campū* biography of the Tibetan ruler Pho-lha-nas (Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung 1974; van der Kuijp 1985), but also for another *campū*, "Tale of the Incomparable Prince," finished in about 1720 (Newman 1996, 1996a) and for his Sanskrit-Tibetan lexicon with its approximately 15,000 entries (Bacot 1930–32). He is said to have edited a bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan collection of *jātaka* stories as well as some commentaries on Tibetan-language grammar (see the listing in Newman 1996a, 419–20).

long been an important stream in Tibetan-style poetry. And so much so that it had become more and more difficult to tell the difference. Certainly, Tibetan *kāvya* should take its rightful places both inside and outside the history of Indian *kāvya*, and as a creative movement in its own right.

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VII

Regional *Kāvyas*

This book ends with a series of readings focused on new forms of *kāvya* that emerged through a long process of experimentation and localization. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, Sanskrit as a literary language continued to evolve and transform itself in often dramatic ways, from the introduction of complex forms of nominal and verbal modality, to lexical and metrical innovation, thematic and stylistic possibilities, and the creation of a new ecology of genres. All of these parameters appear globally, throughout South Asia, but each appearance is locally or regionally inflected; indeed, localization itself is perhaps the most salient analytical feature of later *kāvya*. In many cases great masterpieces were produced for audiences familiar with specifically local geocultural landscapes—so much so that some of these works would have been largely incomprehensible to translocal readers. Thus in many Sanskrit works of this period, the grand visionary portraits of the universal poetic idiom give way to the intimately known, temporally specific, tangible realities of the place.

This is not to say that the focus of innovation in these works was merely on local concerns. Much of what was really new embodies the creative ways in which poets consciously engaged with the ever-increasing richness of the received *kāvya* tradition. Each of the essays in this section discusses modes of dealing with this inheritance, which impart a dimension of depth and complexity. These poems do not repeat the methods and themes of earlier

texts in any simple way. Instead, if read attentively they will be seen to go about their task with a lively sense of irony and a sophisticated awareness of the expressive possibilities which their intertextual space afforded them.

Thus Śākalya Malla's version of the Rāma story, discussed by David Shulman, is, among other things, a markedly Telangana work, both in the physical environment in which it situates Rāma and in the aesthetic sensibilities it assumes. Like other later *Rāmāyaṇa* poets, Śākalya Malla embeds chunks of earlier versions in his telling with the effect of bringing the story into the lived and local present. This poem is also linguistically inventive in its use of Sanskrit, but the new verbal modalities that Shulman discusses neither ignore the complexities of the classical grammar nor pay merely a pedantic attention to them. This Telangana Sanskrit is in itself another creative mechanism for dealing with the potentially constraining burden of the canonical past.

Gary Tubb's study of Kavikarṇapūra reveals a late-medieval Bengali world in all its specific theological, social, and cultural richness. In his focus on Caitanya, this poet's work points back intertextually through earlier layers of Sanskrit poetry—thematically and stylistically reflecting works such as the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and the *Gītāgovinda*, but also bringing together earlier genre experiments in Sanskrit, well beyond the Kṛṣṇa literature—in an attempt to make the language reveal the richness of a life that in itself reenacts episodes already lived by Kṛṣṇa. And through his interactions with the followers selected by Caitanya, the Goswamins, Kavikarṇapūra's work also reflects his awareness of new sensibilities that rest at least in part in the interplay between Sanskrit literati, Muslim bureaucrats and mystics, and political figures along the length of the eastern coast.

A similar cultural interplay of rather heterogeneous elements is at the heart of Allison Busch's discussion of literary production from the Rajput courts west of the Mughal center. Composed not in Sanskrit but Brajbhasha, these are nonetheless clearly works of *kāvya* and exemplify the same kinds of concerns and mechanisms that we find in their Sanskrit counterparts. Along with the classical imagery and mythic repertoires, here the textual mélange includes Persianate contents and vocabulary and patterns borrowed from a strong local bardic tradition. This rich *kāvya* production in Brajbhasha is also accompanied by the production of works of literary theory that are modeled after the cosmopolitan poetic tradition in Sanskrit but are applied to this local world.

One might assume that only such complex local idioms could sustain the full weight of the nascent modern sensibilities. Velcheru Narayana Rao sets out to show that this need not be so. Vishwanatha Satyanarayana's Sanskrit play on the epic figure of Yayāti was composed in 1950. Narayana Rao finds in the play a model of a mind that, while using traditional terminology, is in fact radically

new and psychologically acute about what it means to be human, one that belongs securely in the twentieth century. Here we can see clearly how supple and lively Sanskrit remains almost right into the present, just as the classical epic narrative framework continues to generate literary experiments and indeed, innovations, in this still multilingual and multicultural world. In this sense, the processes that Narayana Rao defines are not dissimilar from and not unrelated to the radical literary experiments that Tom Hunter presents in the chapter concluding this volume, where the story and the inherent dynamics of the *kāvya* tradition continue to evolve in the somewhat exotic Indic world of Southeast Asia.

21

Śākalya Malla's Telangana *Rāmāyaṇa*

The Udārarāghava

David Shulman

A. Spreading the News

atha paścimâdrim agamad rucāṃ patiḥ
pariphulla-hallaka-dalâruṇa-cchaviḥ/
apare ca maṅkṣu nimimaṅkṣur ambudhau
varuṇāya saṃśitum udāra-rāghavam//[1]

The Sun, lord of light,
glowing red like the unfolding petals of the lotus,
reached Sunset Mountain. He was hoping
for a quick bath in the western sea
where he could tell Lord Varuṇa all about
Noble Rāma.

It is a moment of exquisite sadness. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā have arrived at the outskirts of Śṛṅgabera, Guha's city on the banks of the Ganges. Guha graciously greets them and invites them to rest in the wilderness town; Rāma, true to his promise to his father, politely declines. They will rest outside, near the river. Guha feeds Sumantra's horses chick-peas and fodder, at Rāma's urging. It has been a long, emotionally overwhelming day. The sun sets, rich in imputed intentions—a complex *utprekṣā*, as Cauṇḍipaṇḍita, the erudite author of the *Pradyotanī* commentary on this text, laconically notes.

1. *Udārarāghava* of Śākalyamalla, 6.18.

One would have liked him to have drawn out the implications of the figure. The modern editor, T. Venkatacharya, devotes two pages to this verse, noting the lack of *iva* or other markers of the *utprekṣā*.[2] The gist of his reading is that Sūrya has good reasons for turning red: "Even the Sun, the Lord of all the luminaries, became so deeply affected and red...and it seemed he was also so tired, as he was running along, watching and keeping track of Rāma and the party, that he wanted to have a relaxing bath himself by means of a complete immersion in the cold and refreshing waters of the western Indian Ocean."[3] But the redness, according to Venkatacharya, also reflects the Sun's excitement and enthusiasm for the poem he has apparently been listening to all day long—Śākalya Malla's poem, that is, the *Udārarāghava* or *Noble Rāma*. The Sun is eager to share his delight in Śākalya Malla's poetry with Varuṇa, lord of the western ocean—another reason he is hurrying to take his bath. He wants to bring the latest *Rāmāyaṇa*, hot off the press, so to speak, to a connoisseur who is permanently exiled to the watery periphery and who is thus probably starved for good, freshly conceived, modern poetry. Of course, the Sun may also simply want to tell Varuṇa about Noble Rāma, the living hero; specifically, there is the dramatic news bulletin, "Rāma Goes to Forest!" (*rāmo vanāya gacchatîty ākhyātum iva*), as Cauṇḍipaṇḍita puts it.[4] As if Varuṇa didn't already know.

Or as if it were news to us. But this, of course, is just the point. An early fourteenth-century Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* from Telangana *is* news, not because of any unexpected "information" it might contain, and not even because of any particularly striking "deviations from Vālmīki"—as modern scholars like to call them—but because a skilled and inventive poet has perhaps done something unparalleled in the course of retelling or reconfiguring the well-known story. Part of the newness is the reframing that follows axiomatically from the presence, implicit or explicit, of the parent text or texts. Complex intertextual and reflexive effects derive naturally from this kind of dense echoing and interweaving. The poet is confident enough to adapt to his own credit the traditional *Rāmāyaṇa* topos of embedding the text, or some fragment of it, within the larger and newer level of its current unfolding.[5] Thus the *Rāmāyaṇa* tells the story of Rāma, including various summaries and condensations of this story that are buried strategically, always to pointed purpose, within the Vālmīki text; the *Udārarāghava* retells this story, radically revised in tone, texture, selectivity, and

2. Introduction, xlvii–xlviii. There is, however, an alternative reading, noted by the *Sañjivinī* on this verse: *apare ca mañkṣv iva mimañkṣur...*

3. Venkatacharya, Introduction, xlvii–xlviii.

4. Similarly Rāmpalli Gopinātha, author of the *Sañjivinī*, on this verse.

5. See Shulman 2001, 49–82.

emphasis, including its own variety of internal recapitulations and embedded outlines;[6] and the author of the *Udārarāghava*, speaking to us from the outermost layer of the text, on the transparent but brilliantly figured surface of the story, can insert the *Udārarāghava* itself as a total unit available to one internal actor in relation to another (both of them reimagined in the non-literal but still very real domain of poetic fancy).[7] We could thus say that Śākalya Malla has, even in this one slight example, extended by at least one order of magnitude the range and complexity that were given with his pre-existing model. No wonder the Sun god is excited.

We should be able to offer an analytic mapping of this kind of innovative expressivity, even though the text of the *UR*, as we have it, is unfortunately incomplete. (Nine *sarga*s have survived, taking the story up only as far as the Śūrpaṇakhā episode). It would, of course, be much better if we were able to address a complete work in its totality. Still, there is an abundance of striking material and a characteristic set of features evident in verse after verse. Before taking leave of 6.18, we might note the simple but effective alliterative rhyming—*mańkṣu nimimańkṣu*—which depends on a certain delight in slightly elaborate or arcane verbal or verb-derived forms (here, the desiderative adjective *nimimańkṣu*). We will see many more examples of this pleasurable, learned game. One might also pay attention to the syntactic rhythm of the verse, which supplies finite verb and subject almost at its point of departure, only to build up to the marked desiderative of *pāda* ***c*** as the figurative trigger, one might say, for the infinitive clause in *pāda* ***d***, the true "point" of the verse as a whole. The clarity and simplicity of the sentence—hallmarks of this poet's style—should not mask its unusual, deftly calculated nature. If we compare Śākalya Malla's syntax—also his morphology—to those of his *mahākavi* predecessors, we find ourselves at once in a new and rather surprising world.

B. Poet and Wrestler

We know little about Śākalya Malla apart from his name (in several variants: also Śākalya Mallibhaṭṭa, Śākalya Mallana, Bhaṭṭa Malla, and so on, all derived from Mallikārjunasvāmi, Śiva at Śrīśailam) and that of his father, Mādhavasudhī.[8] A dictionary of indeclinables, the *Avyayasaṅgrahanighaṇṭu*, by this same scholar-poet survives in manuscript; in the first verse of that work, he pays his respect to

6. For example, Sumantra's narration to the dying Daśaratha, in Chapter 7, of the events described (often in the same words) in Chapter 6.

7. On reality in *utprekṣā*, see Tubb, forthcoming.

8. Mentioned in the colophon to *sarga* 1.

the god of Bhadri = Bhadrācalam, the famous Rāma shrine on the banks of the Godāvari in inland Andhra.[9] We thus assume that Śākalya Malla was a devotee of Rāma in this temple, and the colophon to *Sarga* 1 informs us that Rāma-Raghunātha himself came to the poet in a dream and gave him a boon—perhaps the gift of composing the *UR*.[10] The final colophon to the *Avyayasaṅgrahanighaṇṭu* refers to the author as *catur-bhāṣā-kavitā-pitāmaha*—the creator of poetry in four languages; did he also compose in Telugu or Kannada? Later medieval writers in Telugu—Appakavi and Mariṅganṭi Siṅgarācārya—mention Śākalya Mallana as the author of Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*s, including a *Niroṣṭhyarāmāyaṇa* which has been lost;[11] it seems that the Telugu tradition claimed Śākalya Malla as a great local or regional poet, and we can definitely situate him in the polyglossic cultural milieu of medieval Andhra, probably during the first half of the fourteenth century.[12]

This date reflects a strong, repeated tradition, or rather distinct fragments of literary history, that would put Śākalya Malla at the courts of the great Pratāparudra II—the last Kākatīya king of Warrangal (d. 1326)[13]—and of Harihara I of Vijayanagara (1336–57) and Siṅgama Nāyuḍu I of Rācakoṇḍa (d. 1361).[14] Note the convergence of these traditions in the early-to-mid-fourteenth century, although none of the stories or the surviving verse-fragment (from the *Prasaṅgaratnāvali*) is strictly reliable for a secure chronology. We are in the world of the Deccani *cāṭu* version of literary history—a world attested within the *UR* itself[15]—and, as usual, this particularly trenchant form of literary criticism has an important story to tell us about our poet.[16] The story

9. Bhadrācalam became famous much later (late seventeenth century) thanks to the beloved songs of Rāmadāsu/ Kañcarla Gopanna and the story surrounding their composition.

10. *iti śrīmat-sukha-svapnâkalita-raghunātha-datta-vara-prasāda-sahaja-sārasvata-śrīśākalya-padâṅkita-mādhavasudhī-tanaya-kavimallâcārya-viracite udāra-rāghave mahākāvye prathamaḥ sargaḥ.*

Subsequent colophons telescope this long *samāsa*, though the poet continues to be referred to as *kavi-mallâcārya*, the "learned hero/wrestler of a poet."

11. *Appakavīyamu* 1; passages cited in Somasekhara Sarma 1948, 490–91.

12. There is one other surviving work by Śākalya Malla: the *Ākhyātacandrikā*, on the Sanskrit verb (published Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1904 and 1936).

13. Thus Ekāmranātha, *Pratāparudracaritramu*, 50–51, 62, speaking of Śākhavĕlli Mallikārjuna Bhaṭṭu and his contest with Sudarśana Mitra; Mallikārjuna triumphs with the help of the goddess Bhadrakāḷi of Hanumakoṇḍa, who produces a full moon on the night of the new moon.

14. Somasekhara Sarma 1948; Sriramamurti 1972, 53–55.

15. See 5.117.

16. *Guruparamparāprabhāva*: *EI* Vol. 13, 222; Vol. 25, 323–24; Somasekhara Sarma 1948 and 316; Sriramamurti 1972; Krishnamachariar 1970, 210.

links Śākalya Malla with Nāyanācārya or Kumāra Vedāntācārya, the son of the great scholar and poet Vedānta Deśika. This Nāyanācārya is said to have conquered Śākalya Malla in debate at the Rācakŏṇḍa court of Siṅgama Nāyuḍu, thereby establishing the supremacy of Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava religion over Advaita (defended by Malla). The defeated Śākalya Malla sent a vampire, *betāla*, in human form to carry the palanquin of his victorious rival; the vampire tried to kill Nāyanācārya by dumping him off the palanquin, but the Śrīvaiṣṇava scholar overcame him with his own magical mantras and forced him to carry him safely and humbly.

What are we to make of this story, which resonates strongly with the tradition from the *Pratāparudracaritramu* about this same poet's direct link to the goddess and the miraculous powers this link offers? Apparently, the *cāṭu* layer of Deccan literary culture thought of Śākalya Malla as embodying, with greater or lesser success, the effectual, magical role of the true poet, who uses his command over the natural world and the invisible realm of various spirits to make reality conform to his wishes, to curse or bless, to take revenge, even to kill. That Śākalya fails in relation to his still more powerful Śrīvaiṣṇava opponent tells us something about the judgment—aesthetic no less than philosophical—tradition is prepared to make. In any case, we have every reason to believe that Śākalya Malla has a certain affinity with the views of the Andhra school of *ālaṅkārikas*, active during this same period (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries), who, like the Telugu grammarian Appakavi in the seventeenth century, gave central importance to the transformative, pragmatic effects inherent in the poet's skilled use of phonemes and syllables.[17] We will want to ask ourselves if the *UR* offers any evidence to support this image of the magically potent poet, the master of grammar, in the widest sense, as the key to an intensified level of linguistically determined reality.

C. Telangana Sanskrit

What first strikes one in the *UR* is the freshness and economy of the language. Śākalya Malla writes a Sanskrit that has the suppleness, the range, and the rich modal forms of the mother-tongues (say, in this case, Telugu). Let me give a few examples of his semantically expanded, nuanced verbal system.

nâjayathāḥ kvâpi narendra-gehe
rājā yathā tarhi vaseḥ sva-gehe/

17. See Shulman 2010.

na hy āśu jahyāḥ pitarau ca vṛddhau
na kekayī cen nara-nātha-jāyā// 5.67

Clearly, you were not born in some royal house or other,
for had you been, you would have been able
to live as a king in your own home.
Nor would you be capable of abandoning your two aged parents
were not Kaikeyī the wife of the king.

The progression from imperfect to optative seems keyed to counter-factual statement, and counter-factuality colors the second optative sentence as well.[18] Such complex modal expressions are rather rare in earlier, classical Sanskrit; in Śākalya Malla, they are prevalent, salient, and precise.

The context is Kausalyā's extended farewell to her son. She has recovered from her fainting spell and is now reflecting painfully and eloquently on what is in store. It is a very moving passage; I cannot refrain from quoting the verse that immediately precedes this optative sequence:

hā rāma vatseti kam āhvayeyam
ambeti câhvāsyati kaḥ suto mam/
niryāti gehāt tvayi tāta rāme
niryānti dehād asavaḥ purā me// 5.66

Alas, whom will I be able to call "Rāma, my son"?
And what son will be left to call me "Mother"?
Even before you, Rāma, son, leave this house
breath will leave my body.

She enacts the endearment—soon to be impossible—one last time, immediately after mourning its imminent loss. The directness of the repetition is very powerful, producing again an emotional climax in *pāda* ***c***. Note the straightforward optative, here a "positive" one, coupled with two futures: the simple *āhvāsyati* and the classically sanctioned *niryānti...purā* (Pāṇini 3.3.4). Like many of Śākalya Malla's verses, this one turns out, on careful listening, to be replete with rhyme of several types and intensities: the final syllables of *pāda*s ***a*** and ***b***, allowing for the alternation in vowel length; the chiming ablatives, critical to the image, or implicit figure, of *pāda*s ***c*** and ***d*** (*gehāt/ dehād*); perhaps most important, the short *yamaka rāme/ [pu]rā me*. "Morphological" (polyptotic) repetition (the locative *niryāti* in ***c*** followed by present *niryānti* in ***d***) gives us a Dravidian

18. For the latter, cf. Tel. conditional + counter-factual (*vāḍu cĕbite nenu cesevāṇṇi*): Krishnamurthi and Gwynn 1985, 177–79.

head-rhyme, as is common in this text. I will have more to say about several of these mechanisms.

Another example of expanded modality in the verb:

mad-rathe calati jāṅghika-dhurye
karṇadhāra-patir apy atha nāvā
tārayet tripatha-gāṃ saritaṃ tān
svâlayāṃś ca munayo 'pi nayeyuḥ// 7.42

This is Sumantra describing to the largely catatonic Daśaratha what happened when he said goodbye to Rāma at the edge of the wilderness. Rāma had given his charioteer precise messages to be delivered upon the latter's return to Ayodhyā. Now Sumantra is back, and he ends his report with the statement:

While my chariot was being carried along by swift horses,
Guha will have taken them in his boat across the Ganges,
and the sages will have guided them to their forest homes.

The two optatives, *tārayet* and *nayeyuḥ*, indicate probable actions that are already in the past (thus future perfect or predictive), as one sees at once from the locative-absolute clause in *pāda* ***a***. Classical Sanskrit might prefer a periphrastic "past optative" (for example, past passive participle + *syāt*),[19] although Śākalya Malla's optative has a slightly different tone—one very familiar from the modern languages.[20]

Even before Sumantra begins his report, Kausalyā has prepared him for the shock in store for him: Daśaratha, she says, no longer takes notice of his surroundings; he stares into space, motionless and mostly silent, except for moments when he suddenly cries out: *kvâsi vatsa raghunandana rāma*, "Where are you, my son, Rāma?" (7.17). He never replies to any queries or statements coming from others. However:

rāma-nāma yadi ko 'py abhidatte
kutra rāma iti mārgati dikṣu/
tvam ca rāma iti yady avadiṣyaḥ
pratyabhotsyata vaco 'py abhaṇiṣyat// 7.19

If someone happens to mention Rāma's name,
he scans the horizon, thinking: "Where is Rāma?"
And you, too—were you to say the word "Rāma,"
he would wake up and might even answer.

19. Speijer 1973, 268.
20. For example, Hindi *ho rahā hogā*, and so on.

The interest here lies in the three *lṛṅ*/conditional forms, clearly used in the sense of a hypothetical optative. Pāṇini (3.3.139–140) restricts the use of *lṛṅ* to *irrealis* (*kriyâtipatti*), and most classical attestations follow this rule. Thus Agni says to Rāma in *Bhaṭṭikāvya* 21.2 (the whole canto is devoted to *lṛṅ* forms):

nâbhavisyad iyaṃ śuddhā yady apâsyam ahaṃ tataḥ

"Had this woman [Sītā] not been pure, I would have rejected her."

This is standard. Occasionally *lṛṅ* functions non-hypothetically, as Speijer has noted;[21] and, of course, one often finds optatives (*liṅ*) in the *lṛṅ-irrealis* mode.[22] What is unusual is the reverse—*lṛṅ* replacing non-*irrealis liṅ*—as in our example from the *UR*.[23] And once again, the exact nuance is not easily captured by our grammars. There is a possibility that Sumantra could use the word "Rāma" in speaking to Daśaratha—he might or might not do so, but if he does, there is the double, equally hypothetical apodosis: the traumatized king just might regain consciousness and respond. Rāmpalli Gopinātha paraphrases the conditionals as present, simple future, and optative: *yady avadiṣyaḥ = bravīṣi cet, tarhi pratyabhotsyata = pratibodhaṃ lapsyate, vaco 'pi abhaṇiṣyat = prativacanam api vadet.*

Quite often morphological future forms take on a new life, as in the following verse (Lakṣmaṇa is trying to persuade Rāma to ignore Daśaratha's command):

kara-sthitaṃ rājyam ihâpahāya
kiṃ gāhitāse gahanaṃ daridraḥ/
vastā vanânte vasitā ca valkaṃ
kaḥ kṣatriyaḥ śrotriyatām upeyāt// 5.28

Are you about to throw away the kingdom
that you hold in your hand
and, like a beggar, plunge deep into the forest?
What warrior would live in the wilderness,
dressed in bark, turning himself into
some kind of Brahmin?

21. Speijer 1973, 270, citing *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.4.2.3; cf. *Bhaṭṭikāvya* 21.16, *kiṃ nārāyaṇam ātmānaṃ nâbhotsyata bhavān ajam*, "Could it be that you failed to perceive/would not perceive yourself as unborn Nārāyaṇa?" A complete study of *lṛṅ* usages would be welcome.

22. Speijer, 1973, with example adduced.

23. Cf. 7.62 (Bharata to Rāma in the forest): *mā krpāṃ jahihi yady atha naiṣyaḥ/ praiṣyam adhy analam*, "Don't abandon compassion. If you were not to come back, I would enter the flames"—introducing an element of doubt that perhaps softens the underlying conditional ("*If* you *don't* come back, I *will* enter the flames").

We have a very unusual periphrastic future (*luṭ*) 2nd. sing. Ātmanepada: *gāhitāse*. (Whitney claims that only a single example of a middle *luṭ* form has turned up in the later language—he cites the *Naiṣadhīya*—although they are attested in Vedic prose).[24] As Renou states, "la nuance qui a prévalu est celle d'un futur à date fixe"[25]—in this case, Rāma's one-time act of entering deep into the wilderness, though there may be a trace of the original durative aspect of this complex tense (Rāma will also stay in the wilderness for many years). But what about *vastā* and *vasitā* in *pāda* ***c***, ostensibly agent-nouns in—*tṛ*, as both commentators tell us? Here the durative quality is transparent, and both forms could, after all, be labeled *luṭ*, thus forming a striking string with *gāhitāse* and culminating in the optative *upeyāt*. We don't have much to go on, but I would hazard the guess that this string corresponds to the Telugu durative participle in *–tū* with a future finite,[26] the final modal form expressly re-contextualizing the force of this future. "Correspondence" is, however, a rather weak explanatory device: it is time we stopped hunting for calques and patterns of translation[27] and set about the more serious task of describing this kind of Sanskrit in its own terms, including syntactic features such as aspect, mode, tense and their associated morphologies. It is entirely characteristic of Śākalya Malla to generate an arcane verbal form like *gāhitāse*, hitherto existing only in the shadowy and theoretical world of the *sūtra*s, to grant this word as conspicuous a setting as possible—insistently making a claim on the reader's attention—and then to situate it within an idiomatic, even colloquial, modal sequence. Reading the *UR*, one constantly observes this expansive tendency at work within the verbal system. An inherited morphology is being activated, producing correct but unfamiliar forms, within a syntax driven largely by aspectual and modal expressive needs.

We could go on exploring these rather exciting semantic possibilities on the level of individual instances of unusual tense- or mode-related forms; there are many dozens of intriguing examples scattered throughout the text. But our main concern lies elsewhere, with more general expressive and thematic concerns. I still hope to say something about the *UR* as a (fragment of a) whole and about what its author is trying to tell us. To begin, we need to think a little about what I will call "figures of grammar," not in the relatively technical sense so brilliantly discussed by Renou,[28] but in a somewhat wider perspective focused on

24. Whitney 1889, 337; cf. Renou 1968, 491–92.

25. Renou 1968, 493.

26. Krishnamurthi and Gwynn 1985, 190.

27. Venkatacharya, the editor of the text, follows this route with a long discussion of the accusative *aśvam avaruhya* (6.7), which he sees as reflecting Telugu *digu* (lv–lxii).

28. Renou 1973.

consistently recurring patterns. We will look first at Śākalya Malla's use of the imperative, and then at his aorists and perfects.

D. Playing with Aspect and Mode

Our poet loves the imperative, especially in its more unusual forms, which he tends to string together in parallel sequences. Sometimes the usage is completely predictable, though emphatic; thus Viśvāmitra orders Rāma to kill Tāṭakā:

jahi jahi rāma vatsa laghu tāḍaya tāḍaya tāta tāṭakāṃ/
raghu-narapāla-nandana kṛpâlaya pālaya pālayeha naḥ/ 2.91

which amounts to saying something like "Shoot already!!" Unlike in other *Rāmāyaṇa*s, here the sheer force of the alliteration may serve to overcome Rāma's doubts, effectively hypnotizing him and thereby pushing him to act. In fact, there is nothing trivial about this linkage, a dependable one in the *UR*, between imperatives and the linguistic magic of *anuprāsa*. As already hinted, Śākalya Malla's program is not so much narrative or descriptive as causal, dramatic, and connective; within the contours of his story, language mostly makes things happen. The imperative, we might say, is the poet's natural, default mode.

Often the sequence intensifies as it goes along:

valkaṃ gṛhāṇeti vanaṃ viśeti
jaṭā badhāneti japan vaseti/
mūlāny aśāneti munir bhaveti
śiśuṃ bruvāṇaḥ śatadhā na dīrye// 4.100

"Put on the bark garment.
Enter the wilderness.
Grow matted locks.
Live there, reciting mantras.
Eat roots.
Become a sage"—
Somehow saying these things to my son,
I fail to explode in a hundred pieces.

Daśaratha is talking to himself after having given in to Kaikeyī's demands and having informed Rāma of the change in plans. Notice the three athematic imperatives, including the archaic and unexpected *badhāna* and *aśāna*. Repetition or cumulation of this sort is frequently accompanied by rhyme; compare:

viśiṇḍhi rājye vibhavaṃ janānāṃ
niṣpiṇḍhi pāpāni nijaiś caritraiḥ/

siṃhâsana-sthe tvayi śāsatîha
mahītalaṃ śītalayāmi netre// 5.15

"Make a special glory for all the subjects in your kingdom.
Grind to dust all evil things by your good actions.
With you enthroned and ruling the earth,
I will look on the world with delight."

Here Kausalyā blesses and commands Rāma, who has come to tell her the bad news; these words are her last before his gentle announcement, "Mother, there is something you don't know" (*mugdhe kim-apy amba na vetsi*, 5.16).[29] The *loṭ* command, as so often, is really a kind of future; Kausalyā expects her son to produce the effects she couches in the imperative. We see, again, the poet's fondness for the arcane (the *Pradyotanī* spells out the *prakriyā* for the two imperatives); the forms are perfectly transparent, immediately intelligible, yet also deliberately conspicuous, thus carrying an expressive load beyond the merely referential. The reader's attention is inevitably focused on this rather special blessing, which foresees something equally special in a future we already know to be precluded or, at the very least, drastically postponed. Blessings, like curses, tend to be formulated iconically; the present case is a good illustration of this general rule.

It is also worth paying some attention to the transition from the two striking or compelling verbs to the highly colloquial idiom that concludes the verse: Kausalyā will, she thinks, literally "cool her eyes," that is, relax and enjoy a properly functioning world. The transition depends upon, or generates, an evident disjunction in speech levels, the most natural and idiomatic following close on the morphological pyrotechnics used to highlight the speaker's heightened powers of speech. This particular kind of incongruity regularly appears in classical Telugu poetry—for example in Śākalya Malla's near-contemporary Śrīnātha, who embeds large chunks of Śrīharṣa's intricate and arcane Sanskrit diction in otherwise limpid Telugu verses of his *Naiṣadhamu*.[30] But in the *UR*, the transition in level occurs regularly within the contours of verses that are, of course, entirely Sanskrit, though such verses could be said to be differentially "Sanskritized," in a particular sense of the term. In other words, a primary poetic device in Telugu has its precise analogue in an elevated and sustained Andhra-based Sanskrit poem.

29. Rāma concludes this preliminary verse with a proverb: *dagdhe/ kukṣau kṣudhā ko 'ñjanam akṣṇi dadyāt*, "when the stomach burns with hunger, who has time to adorn the eyes with kohl?"

30. V. Narayana Rao and I discuss this mechanism in detail: 2012: 48–72.

Alongside the rich profusion of unusual *loṭ* forms, we naturally find a certain preference for the *luṅ*-based prohibitions:

tam īkṣamāṇas tad-avastham itthaṃ
mā tāta khinthā iti rāmacandraḥ/
udaśrur utthāpya nṛpaṃ karābhyāṃ
mūrdhnā nato mūrcchitam ālilinga//

tad-aṅga-saṅgena vihāya murchāṃ
rāmeti tāteti na māṃ tyajeti/
hā vatsa mā gā iti hā kumāre-
ty etāvad eva vyalapan narendraḥ// 4.111–112

Seeing the king in that state—
lying in a faint on the ground—
Rāma, murmuring "Father,
don't be sad," lifted him up and,
with tears in his eyes, bending his head,
held him in his arms.

At the touch of Rāma's body, the king
came to and began to cry:
"Rāma! Son! Don't leave me.
My child! Please
don't go."

mā tāta khinthāḥ: the very rarity of the form deepens and reframes the communication. Similarly in the ascending set of two in verse 112: "Don't leave me" (*na māṃ tyaja*) at once intensifies and simplifies itself in the second command, "Don't go" (*mā gāḥ*). Here the aorist has the effect we might expect from it, that of isolating the root in all its purity and thus rendering its force still more stark and direct. Daśaratha has himself reluctantly given the command to go, but, as the emotional consequences become overwhelming, he gives up all pretense of control or rational thought and speaks what can only be described as his most basic, most primitive and real, personal need. The effect is entirely convincing. Śākalya Malla has a true talent for streamlining such moments of powerful climax, stripping them down to their essentials, stated with great economy of means. The vocatives beautifully echo the verbs; Rāma and Daśaratha both refer to the other with the endearing *tāta*, weaving these two grieving personae together just as their two bodies are intertwined; it is almost as if we were hearing a soft, musical series of moans (*mā tāta...rāma...tāta...hā...mā gāḥ*), a duet at the borders of human speech. The poet, entering with his own narrative

voice at the end, first offers us the indexical *etāvad eva*—again concretely transsemantic, almost beyond normal reference—and concludes with an imperfect (*laṅ*) possibly meant to be continuous or iterative, as suits this ongoing, irresolvable lament.

We may look at one last example of this poet's predilection for extraordinary *loṭ* forms. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā have left Ayodhyā, followed by a vast crowd of the citizens; it is late, Rāma turns to them and asks them to go back:

ādhvam ādhvam aṭavīṣu kad-adhvā
tātam āturam upâdhvam upâdhvam/
yāta mā tamata mā tamateti
prâñjalir muhur abhāṣata bandhūn// 5.110

"Stop! Stop! The forest path is hard going.
Comfort, please comfort my grieving father.
Go now. Don't exhaust yourselves further."
Rāma entreated them, his hands cupped before him.

As before, the imperative alliterates nicely with a proximate noun (*ādhvam... kad-adhvā*), as if drawing a link between the command and Rāma's physical situation on the edge of the forest. The root √*ās* is taken up again, and again doubled, with the prefix *upa-* in *pāda* ***b***. Then we have the repeated prohibition *mā tamata* in ***c***—altogether, another strong series culminating in an unusual, thus rather dramatic, choice of verb. As before, the series manages to combine a sense of natural, rather colloquial directness with the piquant presence of the unfamiliar—Śākalya Malla's signature, one might say.

I have drawn attention to the imperatives, which seem to me representative of a deep current flowing through Śākalya Malla's use of Sanskrit. But in a way, his eloquent past tenses are even more evident. He likes unusual perfects (*liṭ*) and, as with the imperative, he enjoys piling them up in striking, sometimes rather bizarre crescendos:

bhallūka eko bahudhā jihikke
rundhadbhir enam śunakair bubukke/
vane śva-kolāhala-dīrṇa-dikke
valmīka-linaiḥ phaṇibhiḥ paphakke// 1.53

[Daśaratha is heading off to hunt in the forest, where:]

A lone bear was growling, on and on,
while dogs were barking all around it,
the din filling the whole wilderness
where snakes were slithering through their anthill homes.

A verse like this, structured around two examples of the highly favored *bhāve-prayoga*, is almost pure music—iconic, alliterative, and onomatopoeic, both visually and aurally effective, a conjurer's complex display.[31]

Still, the more pervasive contribution of the *UR* to Sanskrit morphology lies in the seemingly limitless aorists (*luṅ*) that the poet produces, as if effortlessly, using them as his primary narrative tense. In this sense, we are dealing with a phenomenon quite distinct from those passages in *kāvya* composed specifically to exercise or exemplify knowledge of the rules for *luṅ* (*Buddha-carita* 2, *Bhaṭṭi-kāvya* 15). In effect, Śākalya Malla has reinvented a tense for purposes of straight, fast-paced narration, usually (though not always) of finite aspect. The forms are, as expected, often less than familiar, though always properly Pāṇinian. Thus we have, to give a random sample:

aihiṣṭa...arāṃkṣīt, 1.47
nirabhaittām, 3.27
āvīt, 3.35
samaśayiṣṭa, 3.40
amāsīt, 3.79
ānaviṣātām, 3.100
adhyavāsāt, 4.78
abhaukṣam, 4.88
adāva, 4.116
adita, 5.85
ahāsta, 5.113
ācakarṇat, 7.10
asasāntvan, 7.15
abhāṅktām, 8.35
atārpsīt, 9.4
sam-abhārṣīt, 9.12

And so on—a complete list would contain many dozens of examples, some of them morphologically interesting in their own right. They bear scrutiny in relation to aspect. Most are immediately transparent and, as in the other forms we have noted, at the same time striking and slightly set off from their context. An element of the grammarian's virtuosity comes into play here—of that we may be sure—but it is also important to state a simple, if somewhat impressionistic fact about these aorists, namely, that they lend a peculiar beauty to texture and style. Both their prevalence and their relative oddity reflect an attempt to

31. Venkatacharya highlights this verse on p. lv; there are many other impressive examples throughout the text.

elaborate a new mode of telling the very well-known story, thus of renewing it and "making it strange" (*priyom ostraneniya*, to borrow a phrase from Shklovsky).[32] On another level, it is possible that the aorist-driven narrative style replicates popular narrative modes in Telugu, for example, the *dvipada* style of the *Raṅganātharāmāyaṇamu*, possibly contemporaneous with (or slightly earlier than) Śākalya Malla.[33]

E. Radical Retelling

Where does this discussion leave us? Clearly, what we are seeing is a linguistic-stylistic configuration, uniquely expressive of its own cultural matrix, with a profusion of syntactically and morphologically innovative elements. I have hardly scratched the surface; for example, lexical and metrical matters—especially this poet's idiosyncratic use of *yamaka*—deserve careful study, as do further verbal modes such as the highly productive desiderative[34] and the intensive.[35] With an eye to the wider implications, I would suggest that we subsume much of this linguistic experimentation under the rubric of the "magic of grammar." When grammar, or the forms it generates, becomes in itself an over-arching master trope, we can be sure that the grammarian poet is demonstrating more than a technical linguistic mastery. It is reality itself—condensed or expanded, intensified, taken apart and re-assembled, re-framed or re-defined—that awaits the poet's vivifying touch. Grammar provides a model, an unusually potent instrument, and an implicit metaphysic.[36] I note, once again, the close affinity Śākalya Malla has to the Andhra school of poeticians, with their interest in automatic intra-linguistic effects.

But this is only one part of the story. The more obvious area of far-reaching innovation in the *UR* is the inter-personal, "psychological" reimagining of each major segment of the story, as is the case with so many medieval *Rāmāyaṇa*s. Here a distinctly radical perspective emerges. One could describe the *UR*, in its surviving, fragmentary form, as a series of individual tableaux or vignettes, each shaping anew the parameters of the ancient story. The remainder of this essay is devoted to an examination of three such vignettes—two of them very concise and condensed, as is typical of the *UR*, and a third that is long enough to allow

32. Shklovsky 1983, 15.

33. See conflicting dates offered by Pingali Laksmikantam (c. 1240), Veturi Prabhakara Sastri (1280–1300), and M. Somasekhara Sarma (late fourteenth century): Sarma 1973, 33.

34. For example, 4.88; 6.1; 6.18 (discussed earlier).

35. For example, 4.115.

36. See discussion by La Porta and Shulman 2007.

us to feel the full force of the poet's imaginative enterprise. I will then conclude with a few more general remarks on complexity.

1. The literary tradition connects Śākalya Malla with Warrangal, Hampi, and Rācakŏṇḍa, all of them centers of the medieval Deccan culture. Occasionally one comes across a passage that seems very close to the raw, wilderness zones of Telangana, as if the poet were describing something he knew from first-hand experience. Look at the following brief description of Sītā's encounter with the tribal women:

bhrātarāv iṣu-bhṛtau kalayantyaḥ
kātarāḥ kva-cid apâsata bhillyaḥ/
tāv avandiṣata vṛddha-kirātāḥ
ke 'pi ke cana phalāny upaninyuḥ//

pakkaṇeṣu mukharī-kṛta-dikkam
bukkati śva-nicaye vana-caryaḥ/
kāv imau sa-dhanuṣāv iha keyam
kāminîti hṛdi kautukam īyuḥ//

maithilīṃ pṛthula-cāru-nitambāṃ
nistala-stana-yugāṃ tanu-madhyāṃ/
śāka-parṇa-vasanāḥ śabarīṇām
ālayo dadṛśur āhita-guñjāḥ//

kaṅkataṃ karaṭi-danta-karaṇḍaṃ
rāṅkavaṃ mṛga-madaṃ ca sukeśyai/
cāmaraṃ ca śuci kā cana dattvā
tām avandata pulinda-purandhrī//

nīla-megha iva bhāti purastād
eṣa kas tava ghana-stani dhanvī/
pṛcchatīṣu śabarīṣv iti tanvī
vyaktam uttaram adatta hasantī// 8.22–26

Observing the two brothers with their arrows,
the Bhil women, frightened, moved back a little.
Some of the older hunters bowed to them;
others offered them fruit.

Their dogs howling, a deafening din,
in the tribal villages,[37] the women

37. *pakkaṇaḥ śabarâlayaḥ* (*Sañjīvinī*). A Dravidian loan-word < Ka. *pakkĕ*, "cow-pen or herd" (*DED* 3301)?

were curious at heart: "Who are these two
archers, and who is *she*?"

Clusters of tribal women, clothed in leaves of teak[38]
and with *guñja*-bead necklaces, stared at Sītā—
her ample buttocks, perfect round breasts,
and narrow waist.

A comb, an ivory box,
a blanket made of deer-hair,
a little musk, and a fine chowrie fan—
one of the women bowed to her,
offering these gifts.

"Just who is that archer, brilliant
as a dark raincloud, who goes
before you? Who is he to you?"
The women kept asking,
and Sītā gave them a definite answer
with her smile.

This slight passage is part of a longer, lyrical description of life in the wilderness, in the early days after the visit to Atri and Anasūyā. It appears to have no precedent in Vālmīki, but that matters little; what does matter is the sense of precisely observed natural and social *realia*. The Śabarīs or Bhillīs are, we can assume, Cĕñcus or other Telangana tribals; the gifts they bring, like the leaves and beads they wear, are entirely suited to their way of life in the wilderness settlements (*ṗakkaṇa*) with their barking dogs and hardened hunters. We have a cleverly stated contrast between these wide-eyed tribal women and the sophisticated and refined city-dwellers—especially the delicate Sītā, embodying the canonical norms of feminine beauty—who have inexplicably landed up in this rough Deccan world. The very simplicity and economy of the description give it a certain charm; it is a moment, nothing more, but one presented to us with vivid clarity and a touch of humor. Note the elliptical conclusion that leaves us with the image of Sītā's smile. She has, it seems, found a way to communicate with the tribals, at least in order to answer the one question that interests them. Along with the almost simple-minded characterization of Sītā (by the poet, seeing her

38. *śāka*. Rāmpalli Gopinātha notes equivalence with Tel. *teku*: *āndhra-bhāṣāyāṃ teku* (*ity ucyate*).

through the women's eyes) and of Rāma (by these women—but their very innocence lends freshness to the inevitable simile, so that we, too, might even feel that we are comparing Rāma to a monsoon cloud for the first time), we have the unusual, rich lexis (*pakkaṇa, bukkati, śāka, kaṅkata*) and the perspicuous aorists (*apāsata, avandiṣata*) that we have seen to be characteristic of Śākalya Malla's style. Much of the *UR* is taken up with elegant, lucidly imagined snapshots like this, often rooted in some highly specific experience of people or place.

2. Moving backwards in time—to a passage which is, surprisingly, mostly proleptic—we have the following miniature depiction of the Ahalyā story:

atha gautamâyatanam etya munîndro
muninâmunârka-sama-bhāḥ samabhāvi/
bharatâgrajena caratâgraja-madhye
pupuve puraḥ pada-rajobhir ahalyā//

upalāyamānam apahāya śarīraṃ
capalā yatheyam abalâkṛtir agre/
mahatāṃ samājam asamâjara-rūpā
tarasâbhipatya śirasā praṇanāma//

kuta āgateyam iti vismayamāne
kuśikâtmaje sahamunau sakumāre/
vṛjina-vyapāya-vikalaṅka-mukhendur
nijagāda sâtha nija-vṛttam ahalyā//

ṛṣi-veṣa-dambha-yuji jambha-virodhiny
anurodhinī yad amunā samagacche/
adhi-mat sa mantum asahann upayantā
viphalo bhaveti maghavānam aśāpsīt//

upalâtmikā ca capale vasa duḥkhaṃ
kalayanty asahyam iti mahyam aśapta/
kṛpayâtha rāma-pada-reṇu-kaṇās tvāṃ
punate pureti punar apy avadiṣṭa//

maghavan-nimittam aghavan mama dehaṃ
muni-śāpa-dagdham aniśaṃ bhṛśa-duḥkham/
katham apy avâsthita tad etad idāṇīṃ
raghu-nandanasya pada-pāṃsur apāvīt//

samagaṃsi yan muni-vareṇa pureva
prakṛtena tena sukṛtena kumāraḥ/

acireṇa maithila-sutāṃ pariṇetā
suciraṃ sukhāny anubhaviṣyati rāmaḥ/

samare vijitya sa-madān asuraughān
ayam arbhakas tava yadâdhvaram āvīt
nimayas tadaiva niraceṣata sītā-
raghu-virayoḥ pariṇayaṃ mithilāyām//

vidito videha-nagare guru-buddhis
tanayo mamâsti janakasya purodhāḥ/
sa vivâham asya ghaṭayiṣyati śīghraṃ
yad ayam dadhīta dhanur aiśam adhi-jyam//

dhanuṣo dharādhara-mayasya guṇaḥ san
phaṇi-rāja eṣa virarāja purâjau/
amunā pura-trayam abhitta sa dhanvī
hariṇā śareṇa hariṇâṅka-kirīṭaḥ//

naya tatra kauśika narendra-kumāraṃ
su-kumāra-mūrtim apanīta-mad-ārtim/
giri-dhanva-dhanvani vitanvati bāhvor
balam atra citram iti vakṣyati lokaḥ//

iti vādinīṃ ṛṣi-kalatram ahalyām
anagheti te samavadanta mahāntaḥ/
sa ca gautamo muni-girā gṛhiṇīṃ svām
anukampayânujagṛhe sva-gṛheṣu// 3.28–39

Then the great sage, luminous as the sun,
came to Gautama's sanctuary and was warmly
welcomed. Before their eyes, as Bharata's
elder brother walked amidst the Brahmins,
Ahalyā arose, purified by the dust of his feet,

and, casting off her body that had been a rock,
like a streak of lightning she rushed,
a young girl once again, endowed with peerless,
deathless beauty, to bow before
that assembly of the wise.

Viśvāmitra, Gautama, and the two young boys
were amazed: "Where did *she* come from?"
Her face like the moon without its spot—

for her sin had vanished—Ahalyā proceeded to tell
her story.

"Since I went along with Indra
when he came to me disguised as this sage,
since I slept with him freely,
my husband, unable to contain that crime
that was centered on me cursed Indra
to lose his manhood.

'And as for you, wanton woman,
live on as a rock, suffering
unbearable sorrow'—thus he cursed me,[39]
but kindly added, 'In some future time
grains of dust from Rāma's feet
will make you pure again.'

This body of mine, sinful
because of Indra, burning and suffering
without cease through the sage's curse,
survived somehow or other—and now
the dust from Rāma's feet has rendered it pure.

I am reunited,
just like before, with the fine sage.
This boy, Rāma, who did the deed,
will very soon marry the daughter of Mithilā's king
and will long be happy.

When this young fellow protected the rite
by conquering huge numbers of mad demons,
the Nimi kings came to a decision:
there will be a wedding, in Mithilā, of Sītā and Rāma.

I have a son[40] who is very well-known
in that city—wise as Bṛhaspati,
and family priest to King Janaka.
He'll perform the wedding quickly
once the boy has strung Śiva's bow.

39. Note the surprising dative with *aśapta*, discussed at length by Venkatacharya, 360. Cauṇḍi Paṇḍita rules out the application of Pāṇini 1.4.34, although this *sūtra* could, it seems, explain the form (dative with the object of strong emotion).

40. Śatānanda.

With this bow, made of a mountain,
the Archer, who wears the moon as his crown,
shot down the Triple City:
the King of the Snakes was the splendid bow-string,
and Hari was the arrow.

So, Viśvāmitra, take this gentle young man there,
the one who took away my suffering.
When he shows the power of his arms
by stringing that bow, everyone
will be astonished."

She finished speaking. All the great sages
proclaimed her to be without sin.
At Viśvāmitra's urging, Gautama
showed compassion for his wife
and took her back in his home.

Lest the final statement sound a little harsh—Gautama still seems to need Viśvāmitra's approval for reinstating Ahalyā—we hear two verses later that he joins, apparently somewhat reluctantly, the party journeying to Mithilā; he is *cira-viprakṛṣṭa-gṛhiṇī-spṛhayitṛ*, "hungry for the wife who was absent so long" (3.41). This is exactly the kind of deft, laconic, very human touch that Śākalya Malla so often brings to characterization. Gautama has missed her, all these years. Now listen again to how succinctly Ahalyā tells the central incident in her story:

ṛṣi-veṣa-dambha-yuji jambha-virodhiny
anurodhinī yad amunā samagacche/
adhi-mat sa mantum asahann upayantā
viphalo bhaveti maghavānam aśāpsīt//

She acknowledges her own part in what happened: she was *anurodhinī*, a willing player in Indra's deceitful game. She speaks directly, without glossing over anything, using morally laden words like *agha* and *mantu*, before going on to quote the formula of the curse as it appears in Vālmīki: *viphalo bhava* (*VR* 1.48.27: *akartavyam idam yasmād viphalas tvam bhaviṣyasi*, cited by Cauṇḍisūri). As usual, the quotation highlights and deepens the expression even as it elaborates the frame through which we perceive it: we hear Ahalyā telling her story within a new *Rāmāyaṇa* by quoting the first *Rāmāyaṇa*-poet verbatim, thus embedding the original text still more deeply, but also more conspicuously,

within the newly configured surface-narration. Here is another slight example of the poetic device we saw at the beginning of this essay. Every time our Telangana poet quotes a phrase from the "parent" text, this kind of complexity comes into play.

Such effects tend to be accompanied by a striking sensitivity to matters of sequence and temporality. Indeed, the zig-zag movement backward and forward in time is probably the most salient, and also the most innovative feature of this whole passage. Ahalyā begins by briefly recounting what happened in the past; but this narrative includes Gautama's statement about her future redemption from the curse, when the dust from Rāma's feet will purify her. Note the indexical adverb *purā*, which two verses later reappears, this time with reference to the past: Ahalyā is reunited with her husband "just like before" (*pureva*). A shifting indexical temporality is a staple feature of a text like the *UR*, with its love for embedded fragments.[41] Now Ahalyā reverts to the past: somehow or other she suffered years of stony existence; one even gets a glimpse of what she was thinking of, over and over: Indra (*maghavān*) was the reason (*nimitta*) for her body's sin (*agha*), *maghavan-nimittam aghavan mama deham*...., stated with pointed *yamaka* repetition. Now that she has been released, the future has also been released from its obscurity; there will soon be a wedding, this has already been decided (*niraceṣata*) by the Nimis—in the past, when Rāma protected Viśvāmitra's rite. She knows exactly how and when this will happen; her own son will perform the ceremony; before it can take place, however, Rāma will have to string Śiva's bow, the same one that the god used against the Tripura demons. A little piece of mythic circumstance is woven into this remarkable tapestry of events that have either already unfolded, both in Ahalyā's personal past and in Vālmīki's narration of that past, or that *will have* unfolded—once again, in Ahalyā's proleptic memory and in the classical text. How does Ahalyā know the future with such confidence? Has she read the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*? Since these events are anyway well known to the listeners *outside* the text, Ahalyā could almost be narrating past events as future from a point deliberately retrojected before their occurrence—a recognized historiographical mode in medieval Andhra, discussed at length by Wagoner and others.[42]

Still, Ahalyā's prediction has a somewhat ironic force: *suciraṃ sukhāny anubhaviṣyati rāmaḥ*, Rāma (after marrying Sītā) "will long be happy."

41. Note also the use of *agre* and *puraḥ* in 28–29.

42. Wagoner 1993, 33–45; Narayana Rao et al. 2001, 120–22; Shulman 2004, 178–86.

Just how long will it be? Maybe Ahalyā's prophetic abilities are, after all, somewhat limited. Or perhaps our author imagines his way, with subtlety and sensitivity, into her point of view, which at that particular moment might indeed see Rāma's future in a relatively rosy light. The passage seems to focus, above all, on Śatānanda's role, soon to be activated, as if this mother's pride in her first-born son were actually the main thing on her mind.[43] Other than that, one is struck by the condensed clarity of expression, the deft, economic portraits, the swift pace—it is all hardly more than a sketch, but a masterful, rather moving one—and, of course, by the hallmarks of Śākalya's Sanskrit style that are, by now, familiar. As usual, there are intense alliterative rhythms (*pupuve puraḥ pada-rajobhir ahalyā*, 28; *punate pureti punar apy avadiṣṭa*, 32, and so on); a profusion of narrative aorists (*avâsthita, apāvīt, aśāpsīt, niraceṣata*, and so on.); inventive modal expressions (*upalāyamānam apahāya śarīram*, 29); and sly, erudite quotations that serve at once to elevate and to tease (*adhi-mat*, 31, probably recalling Māgha 7.41, *adhi-tvad*, as Venkatacharya notes).[44] All in all, the poet's light touch is surely impressive. Anyone who knows the Ahalyā story from Vālmīki or from some other *Rāmāyaṇa* will find something new, perhaps a little tantalizing, in Śākalya Malla's sleek vignette.

3] For a more elaborated instance of the technique, we can follow the two brothers together with Viśvāmitra and Gautama as they enter Ayodhyā, where Janaka is busy with a sacrificial rite while Sītā awaits her still unrecognized bridegroom. First we have a processional, a set piece familiar from Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa and, in particular, from the south Indian genre of *ulā*.[45] Women, eager to catch a glimpse of the two young men (*raghu-nandanāv avalulokiṣamāṇāḥ*, 3.47), turn up *en dishabille*: one is so flustered she has dabbed musk on her feet, rubbed her breasts with lac, and put the *tilaka* dot on her cheek (48). Another throws away the box of kohl and the stick used to apply it and instead smears *kuṅkuma* in her eyes (50). They are in a rush, oblivious to the fact that their saris are slipping from their waists, their hair undone.

karayor nidhāya maṇi-nūpura-yugmaṃ
caraṇe ca hasta-valayaṃ kalayantyā/

43. See *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* 1.51, where Śatānanda asks Viśvāmitra about his mother and father and recalls Ahalyā's unhappy story.

44. Notes to the *Sañjīvinī* on this verse: pp. 359–60.

45. *Buddhacarita*; *Raghumvaṃśa* 7.1–16; Shulman 1985, 312–24; see Wentworth 2011.

gala-naddha-kāñci-latayā kṛta-yāna-
tvarayā kayâpi nirayāyi niśântāt// (53)

A jeweled anklet
on each arm, and bracelets
around her ankles,
her belt tied around her neck,
one flustered lady rushed
out of the house.

As is customary in such situations, the object of all this attention remains mostly impassive, though he does notice the aberrations of these young women (*paura-yauvata-vilāsa-vikārān avalokayan*, 56). He is playing at being a child (*dhṛta-balimeva*, 56). The Brahmins involved in the sacrifice, no less affected than the women, drop their spoons and ladles when they catch sight of the two boys (57).

Janaka has the whole party seated on carpets of *kuśa* grass; he stares long and hard at Rāma. He asks Viśvāmitra who the boy is and how he came to be associated with a forest-dwelling ascetic. Viśvāmitra says with enviable confidence: "He is the son of Daśaratha; he protected my sacrifice; now he is about to bend Śiva's bow and marry your daughter." Janaka is hardly convinced:

muni-vākyam apy avitathaṃ kalayan taṃ
dhṛta-kāka-pakṣam api rāmam avekṣya/
kaṭhinaṃ dhanuḥ kamaṭha-pṛṣṭha-gariṣṭham
manasā samīkṣya samadhikṣata bhūpaḥ// (61)

Though it was a sage who had spoken,
the king thought he was wrong.
He looked at Rāma, his hair still tied
in a child's tuft. Then he called to mind
that bow, hard and heavy as a tortoise shell.
He had his doubts.

Look at the simplicity and economy of the narration, at how naturally and—given what we know is about to happen—how ironically it builds to the laconic conclusion (in another transparent, marked aorist). Rāma has the child's tuft, *kāka-pakṣa*, the main sign of his young age; the phrase is reminiscent of a well-known autobiographical Telugu verse by Śrīnātha, Śākalya Malla's contemporary: *cinnāri pŏnnāri ciruta kūkaṭināḍu*, "When I was still a boy, my hair hardly

long enough to make a braid..."[46] One might also pay attention to the rush of harsh plosives in *pāda* 3, a nicely iconic intimation of the bow's true menace.

Suddenly, Janaka's doubt vanishes; he remembers Nārada's promise and, in a flash of insight, he recognizes Rāma for who he really is—the *paramaḥ pumān*, God himself. This almost oblique, glancing mode is the only way our poet allows the metaphysical register to surface, and even at that rather rarely.[47] He doesn't want us to forget that we are listening to a story about God, as if there were any danger that we might; but neither will he rub it in. The presence of the god is, like so much else in this work, a matter of deft, light, pointed touches, all the more effective for being so understated. I will come back to this matter.

If Janaka's mind is at rest, one cannot say the same for Sītā, who has climbed to the upper story of the palace to get a look at her bridegroom, *sva-vara*, through the window. She likes what she sees; turning to her companion, she asks playfully, "Do you happen to enjoy cloud-rise (*jaladodayaḥ kim anumodayati tvām*)?" Sītā's intelligent (*vidagdhā*) girlfriend has the wit to respond: "Only when there's a flash of lightning nearby (*taḍid atra kâpi saralā taralâkṣi sphurati*, 64)." But there's a terrible problem: Sītā knows about the condition (*paṇa* = *śulka*) Janaka has laid down. On one side there is Śiva's dreadful bow; on the other, the boy's still obviously immature arms. How can he string it? "My poor father has set the stakes [or the bride-price] very unwisely" (*ku-paṇodyato 'dya kṛpaṇo 'jani tātaḥ*, 65). And she goes on to develop this complaint in a series of impressive, outspoken verses:

dhanuṣo 'dhiropaṇa-paṇena paṇeta
kṣiti-po yadîha vighaṭeta vivāhaḥ/
adayaṃ tad asya hṛdayaṃ yad ayaṃ māṃ
raghu-vatsakāya na hi ditsati tūṣṇīm//

sura-siddha-kiṃpuruṣa-kinnara-vidyā-
dhara-yakṣa-rākṣasa-narendra-kuleṣu/
tuliteśa-cāpam api câparam asmān
na varaṃ vṛṇīya kim u tāta-paṇena//

46. Śrīnātha, *Kāśīkhaṇḍamu* 1.7, with thanks to Velcheru Narayana Rao.

47. The *ādyaḥ pumān* is mentioned in the first, invocatory verse, 1.1. Similar references are scattered, with seeming casualness, throughout the text; see, for example, 9.32: the Ancient Puruṣa stayed for a long time, in the guise of Rāma, in Pañcavaṭī (*raghu-vīra-miṣeṇa pañcavaṭyāṃ ciram asthāyi cirantanena puṃsā*).

varaṇâgatāya śaraṇâgata-rakṣā-
maṇaye varāya paṇa-bandham apâsya/
yadi māṃ dadīta mithilā-patir asmai
vidhir anukūlyam ayate dayate me// (66–68)

If the king is still betting on his stringing the bow,
this marriage may never happen.
His heart lacks all mercy
if he doesn't want to give me freely,
without any conditions,
to this Raghu boy.

Even if there is someone else among the gods
or Siddhas or Kiṃpurusas or Vidyādharas
or Yakṣas or Rākṣasas or men
who is equal to stringing Śiva's bow,
I will choose no one
except this boy. What's the point
of Father's stipulation?[48]

If the King were to set aside all conditions
and just give me to this bridegroom,
the one who came here to choose me,
the one who takes care of everyone who seeks him,
then, only then, would Fate be kind
to me.

Sītā's skeptical, impatient monologue—she is ostensibly speaking to her girlfriend, but in fact we are listening to the debate that is taking place in her mind—gives us entry into a highly subjective and active presence. She is no passive witness to these fateful events; she knows, with certainty, what she wants, and she is furious at what now appears to be a rather silly, almost bureaucratic technicality that may ruin everything. What is the point of laying down conditions when the right man turns up? Rāma, of course, is more than merely the right "man"; Sītā seems to know from the outset that this *raghu-vatsaka*, the "kid from the Raghus," is *śaraṇâgata-rakṣā-maṇi*, "the one who takes care of everyone who seeks him" (or takes refuge with him)—a pregnant Śrīvaiṣṇava

48. Following Cauṇḍisūri: *kiṃ vā prayojanam ity arthaḥ*; similarly in the *Sañjīvinī*. However, the logic of Sītā's entire stance might make it preferable to translate: "How much less (*kim u*) would I choose someone just because of Father's condition!"

term. The theological reference is, again, slipped rather obliquely into Sītā's stream of thought. Who can fail to identify with her protest, played out in a series of beautifully articulated and entirely convincing speculations? The optative and desiderative forms seem to waver on the boundary between real and unreal, another set of striking examples of this refined modal system. And Sītā is left with her doubts and anxieties; the bride-test must proceed as planned, although a quiver of her left eye encourages her; she thrills like a peahen (*pracalākinī*, 69).

Everyone in the court has heard and wondered at Viśvāmitra's self-assured prediction. So has Janaka, as we know; still, he needs the test (he is *dāśarathi-śakti-parīkṣī*, 70). The bow is laboriously carried in—harder than the shell of the great tortoise, longer than Ādiśeṣa, heavier than the mountains that bear the earth, a challenge that makes mockery of all heroes' strength (71). No sooner is it there than doubts again flood nearly all the eyewitnesses: how can this boy bend it (74)? Janaka, too, tells Rāma: "It seems rather unlikely that you can handle this bow of Śiva's" (*hara-kārmukaṃ namayasîti na yuktam*, 75). Only Viśvāmitra remains calm, speaking softly to Rāma: "First pick it up in your hand, then take Sītā's hand in marriage. Put their doubts to rest" (*dhanuṣaḥ kara-grahaṇa-pūrvakam atra kṣiti-jā-kara-grahaṇam ācara vatsa/ nama-yann idam śamaya saṃśayam eṣām*, 76). Rāma says merely: "Yes" (*tatheti*). His upper cloth tied around his waist so as not to get in his way, he approaches the bow "like a baby-cloud approaching lightning" (*taḍid-antikaṃ jalada-pota iva*, 77).

He folds his hands in worship, then easily grasps the bow in the middle (*lastaka-deśa*) and lifts it, wondering only how Śiva could have held something so small and light in his hand (*katham atra śaṅkara-karâbjam amāsīt*, 79). He is smiling. He strings it. Lakṣmaṇa, watching nervously from the sidelines, calls out a series of hopeful and anxious commands:

pṛthivi sthirī-bhava bhujaṅga vahaināṃ
tad idaṃ dvayaṃ kamaṭha-rāja dadhīthāḥ/
dig-ibhāś ca dhatta tad api trayam aiśam
dhanur āditârya iti lakṣmaṇa ūcel/ (80)

"Earth: Stand firm!
Great Serpent: Hold her up!
Tortoise-King: Support them both!
Elephants of the directions: Sustain all three!
This fine fellow has lifted Śiva's bow."

The weight and density of the bow may have increased merely by Rāma's act of lifting it. But Rāma himself remains quite casual, despite the torrents of flowers falling from the sky; he places the strung bow on his knees, then lifts it again, holding it with his left fist as he bends it into a full circle with his right hand—so that he appears at that moment like the sun surrounded by a halo of mist (*pari-veṣāṇa iva bhānur abhāsīt*, 83).[49] He has bent the bow too far: it breaks with a resounding crack that we can hear in the poet's phrase:

rabhasoccalac-caṭacaṭa-dhvani bāhvor
ati-mātra-karṣaṇa-bhareṇa babhañje (84).

The ongoing reverberations give rise to a string of sharp, lyrical images. The whole world echoes the snapping of the bow; the noise covers the earth, reaches heaven and the limits of all space, passes through the ocean and the nether world, disturbs rivers in their flow (85).

haṭha-bhajyamāna-hara-kārmuka-nāde
dalayaty ajâṇḍa-kuharaṃ bahir antaḥ/
bhaya-kampamāna-phaṇi-rāja-phaṇâlī-
nilayena bhūmi-valayena vavalle// (86)

The sound of the splitting bow
pierced the inner dome of the cosmos
and went beyond it. The serpent that holds
the earth on his hoods shook in terror,
and the earth, poised above them, teetered.

This set of verses is a masterpiece of phono-aesthetic iconicity, morphological virtuosity, and poetic invention. From this point on, most of the verbs are passive intransitives (*bhāve prayoga*) with attached instrumentals, a proto-ergative syntagma[50] that perhaps enhances the sense of rapid movement:

cakitasya saṃbhrama-galad-gala-rajjoḥ
sura-vāraṇasya jagale nigaḍena/
api tena dāna-kupitena diviṣṭhāḥ
kara-danta-koṭibhir amoṭiṣatâṭṭāḥ// (87)

49. Cf. *Naiṣadhīyacarita* 1.14 for the *pariveṣa* halo.
50. As in 86d. See Bubenik 1989.

The rope tied to Indra's elephant at the neck
snapped loose as he startled and chafed,
and his leg-iron, too, slipped off.
He charged, angry and wild, and all the towers
of heaven collapsed under the blows of his trunk
and sharp tusks.

Airāvata is not alone; the elephants that stand at the edges of space, holding up the earth, are also tormented by the terrifying noise and only just manage not to drop their precarious burden. Oceans turn turbid as whales and sea-monsters are tossed into the sky (*cakitotpatat-timi-timiṅgala-saṅghaiḥ kalilena sindhu-salilena babhuve*, 88). The roar, amplified by Viṣṇu's conch, wakes the god from his Yogic sleep. Mountain peaks are pulverized as the echo moves from cave to cave (89). There are severe chain reactions:

prasarat-pratidhvani-patan-mṛga-yūthaṃ
valamāna-śākhi-vicalat[51]*-pracalāki/*
girijâdri-gahvaram upahvarayantī
bhaya-vihvalā paśupatiṃ parirebhe//
ibha-kumbha-tulya-kuca-kumbha-yugāyāḥ
parirambha-saṃbhrama-rasena bhavānyāḥ/
giriśo 'pi cāpa-dalanaṃ bahu mene
na hi vastu-hānim anuśocati kāmī// (90–91)

Herds of deer stampeding,
trees toppling, peacocks tumbling:
Pārvatī, alarmed, shrinking into a cave
on that mountain fell into Śiva's
embrace—and he was so overcome
at the touch of her taut breasts
that he happily conceded the loss of his bow.
That's how it is with lovers: they don't worry
about expense.

With this *arthântara-nyāsa*, the echoes stop; Rāma casts aside the broken bow and rushes to offer obeisance to his guru and to his father-in-law-to-be. A crescendo of percussive wizardry punctuated by salient "figures of grammar" concludes another concise, self-contained vignette.

51. Following both commentaries (for the printed **vikacat-*).

From the opening *ulā* to the moment the universe stops crackling with echoes, a mere 50 verses have rolled past. It is not only narrative action that has been compressed, abstracted, and intensified; as we saw, the passage also manages to include fragments of other genres (*ulā, kāla-jñāna*), an intricate, skeptical inner dialogue of remarkable freshness and depth, and a colorful, powerfully imagined figurative series. This integrative and inventive character of what is ostensibly a fast-paced reworking of the classical materials makes the *UR* far more than a simple tour de force couched in a crisp Sanskrit expressly re-invented for this purpose. Rather, it is a condensed, if partial, articulation of a broad cultural configuration, which has localized and internalized the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes in a distinctive Telangana mode—tough, ironic, a little stark, but also subtle, lyrical, visually striking, elegant and reflexive—rather like the thirteenth-century Kākatīya sculptures at the Rāmappa Temple in Palampet, to name one parallel from this same area, from a generation or two before Śākalya Malla.

4] Complexity, in a highly structured, systemically organized world like that of *kāvya*, tends to be recursive. Elements fold back upon themselves, acquiring greater depth with each successive fold. Feedback mechanisms emerge naturally, regulating the transitions among planes or surfaces. Second- or third-order reflections and reverberations are the norm; non-reflexive, single-surface statements may not exist. Even in the *ādi-kāvya*, the listener can only overhear Rāma listening to his sons as they sing his own story; in a later *Rāmāyaṇa* like the *UR*, one overhears the poet overhearing his model even as one watches him recreating it, abstracting, selecting, repeating, intensifying, deepening, commenting, marking, re-engaging.

Thus in the *UR*, as in the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, Sītā listens patiently as Rāma tries to persuade her to stay in Ayodhyā while he goes off into the forest; when he has finished his speech, she brings forward a clinching argument:

rāmāyaṇānîha purātanāni
purātanebhyo bahuśaḥ śrutāni/
na kvâpi vaideha-sutāṃ vihāya
rāmo vanaṃ yāta iti śrutaṃ me// (5.48)

There are many ancient *Rāmāyaṇa*s
passed down by the ancients.
I have never heard of one
where Rāma leaves Sītā behind
when he goes to the forest.

Similarly, we have the self-embedded inset with which we began—the Sun rushing to sing the *UR* to Varuṇa—and a rich variety of similar devices, all of them loudly proclaiming to the reader that this text is confidently reorganizing the *Rāmāyaṇa* universe on its own terms, in transparent relation to past voices, in a distinctive style very much linked to a specific time and place, for an audience that could surely identify themselves and their cultural milieu within this text.

Sometimes the density of recursive allusion requires a kind of decoding, as if the text had turned so deeply inward that straightforward reference is almost lost. Thus Janaka sends an encrypted letter to Daśaratha announcing the results of the *svayaṃvara* and Rāma's impending marriage to Sītā:

viśikhe dhanur-bhaji tad-ārava-bhītyā
calite rathe rathini tad-dhvani-hṛṣṭe/
guṇa-sārathī ca śaram ānaviṣātāṃ
śayanâtmajāv iti daduḥ śubha-lekham// 3.100

The arrow broke the bow.
Frightened by that noise,
the chariot quaked.
The charioteer rejoiced at the sound.
Bowstring and driver,
bed and child,
praised that arrow.

In effect, this surreal yet strangely moving *śubha-lekha* is a wedding invitation—the only one Daśaratha will get. Fortunately, Sumantra, the driver who will have such a critical role to play at a later stage in the story, is good at such puzzles. He immediately smiles and explains the gist of the message to Daśaratha; Vasiṣṭha decodes it word by word:

viśikho 'pi viṣṇur ayam eṣa sutas te
sa ratho dharaiva sa rathī giri-dhanvā/
guṇa-sārathī kalaya śeṣa-viriñcī
śayanâtmajāv iti jagāda vasiṣṭhaḥ// (3.102)

The arrow is Viṣṇu, who is your son.
The chariot is the Earth. The charioteer is Śiva,
who took a mountain for his bow.
Recognize in the bowstring and driver,
the bed and child, Ādiśeṣa and Brahmā.

Even this level of detail may not be quite enough unless one happens to remember the story of the *Tripura-dahana*, when Śiva shot Viṣṇu as his arrow

while riding the earth as a chariot, and so on. But that reference is not incidental: the poet wants to draw in these connections, bringing to the fore the mythic background of the bow that Rāma has just broken and thereby supplying a ready suggestion that, properly interpreted, should convey to Daśaratha—and of course to us—the specific content and meaning of Janaka's message. Nothing has been left to chance. The bow has a history, as does the moment when Rāma breaks it; perhaps only a later *Rāmāyaṇa*-poet such as Śākalya Malla can make the entire sequence apparent, so that we see this episode in its true depth, resonant, interconnected, and causally intelligible. The Telangana poet reveals not the figure but the ground; it is this revelation that then allows him to identify the figure as he really is—the hero-god. Out of the over-determined complexity of the encoded design, a great simplicity emerges and fades away. "He—Viṣṇu—is your son." Perhaps Daśaratha was unsure. Perhaps he didn't know. As we have seen, most of the theological references of the *UR* fit into this pattern of gentle, lucid revelation, at once simple, unemphatic, and transient, in circumstances of deepening reflection.

It can be like casting a stone into a pool. Rāma mounts the chariot to leave Ayodhyā for the forest. He bows to his father's palace. The people in the city bow to him, thinking him, this *raghu-nandana*, to be Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa himself, visible and luminous in the midst of the orb of the autumn sun:

śaradi savitur madhye-bimbaṃ cakāsatam ānamanty
amata janatā sâkṣān-nārāyaṇaṃ raghu-nandanam (5.98)

He "is" a visible Nārāyaṇa, blazing in the midst of the autumn sun, and they imagine him to be this; we watch them imagining him to be what we know him to be. At such a moment, the mind experiences an incremental expansion, a slight dilation of space. Staggered, concentric frames superimpose knowledge, imagination, and reported perception. They never quite coalesce; a recalcitrant complexity remains. The widest frame is ours—also the most recent. We are shown the entire series, conjured up by a single, coherent voice, which, by virtue of this very complexity and the intensity of the insight it allows, does, in fact, in many ways, transcend its prototype or source. This is Śākalya Malla's great achievement. Depth is beautiful—also fascinating. There is the promise of something new. The arrow breaks the bow.

In a way, all that we have seen depends on two or three primary mechanisms that we can name again, in conclusion. First comes the figuration of grammar, the quasi-magical "marking" of morphology, modality, and metrical invention. In poetry as in language generally, marking is never innocent. To foreground rhyming imperatives, or strongly alliterative and iconic perfects, or delightfully arcane aorists, or nuanced and unexpected modal expressions—and to do this

lightly, playfully, elegantly—is to call attention to what is new and freshly superimposed on the inherited contours of the story. In fact, novelty of this order tends to cumulate and overwhelm; it is no longer the "same" story. (No *Rāmāyaṇa* is ever the same story). The focus has changed dramatically; we are now led to contemplate Ahalyā's awareness during her endless sojourn as a stone, or Sītā's sense of outrage at having been planted, as it were, in the middle of an extremely inconvenient story that hems her in, forcing her to act out—yet again—the irritating and wholly redundant business of the bridal contest. Such matters, in the case of the *UR* strikingly subjective or psychological in tone, have become the true subject matter of the text. One could make a still stronger, historical claim having to do with the incipient subjectivity and individuality of the Deccani Telugu tradition more generally—so that Śākalya Malla would be situated at an early point in an evolving process—but this requires another kind of argument, beyond the scope of this exploratory essay.

Then there is the matter of "superimposition" in general; or perhaps we should speak of "infra-imposition," since the reflexive, depth-generating features of the *UR* tend to insert themselves within the wider, rapid-fire frame. This, too, is a kind of marking: when the sun rushes to recite the *UR* to Varuṇa, the poet is, in effect, showing us how he, Śākalya Malla, has nested deep within the *Rāmāyaṇa* contours and, from this vantage point, engages all previous versions. "Have you ever heard a *Rāmāyaṇa* where Sītā stays home?" So Sītā, like all the other players, is repeating a sequence she knows very well; she is, we might say, freely choosing to do so, invoking precedent and citing classical texts as a kind of self-assertion; she wills herself to go with Rāma, apparently knowing that this time things will be different—not in the broad lines and sweep of the action, but in the stuff of experience, the infinite, minute details of feeling and perception that actually comprise all of life. And there will be surprises: this time round, Cĕñcu women may give her a comb or an ivory box, for example. If they do so, they will be emerging out of an opaque, rather silent setting, pregnant with possibilities, fashioned from these earlier versions. At no point is this field of potential resonance, or dissonance, hidden from view. Thus the *UR* is always a three-dimensional text at the very least; four-dimensional, if temporal disjunction and coalescence are brought into view, as in the example of the coded wedding-announcement with its mythic register. What repeats is always new at the instant of repetition, which thus illuminates a history.

Finally, we might think of such a text in terms of consequential play, a form of playing that produces change. The poet uses whatever lies closest to hand—unusual aorists, rare lexemes or metremes; riddle-like messages; well-worn *alaṅkāra*s; the slight vignettes that, taken together, produce a set of individual actors who are initially familiar but, as one proceeds through the poetic process,

somehow more and more strange—as Shklovsky has said. Indeed, in a way, in our text it is the most familiar, most intimately remembered, that becomes most strange. That is why one reads on, or reads again.

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22

The Classical Past in the Mughal Present

The Brajbhasha Rīti *Tradition*

Allison Busch

guru guṇa sāgara
R. S. McGregor, in memoriam

A. Literary Newness in Dialogue with Tradition

Dynamic innovations occurred in Indian *kāvya* that can be linked to the new cultural repertoires of regional courts during the height of Mughal rule. These innovations are distinctive features of the Brajbhasha *rīti* tradition,[1] the neoclassical style of Hindi literature that took root in north India from the late sixteenth century. While Brajbhasha is relatively well known for its wealth of *bhakti* (devotional) texts, few people are even aware that the language was also a major medium for *kāvya*. During the early modern period the Brahmin literati employed by regional north Indian kingdoms elevated the vernacular to a new expressive and social capacity by transplanting the core elements of Sanskrit *alaṅkāraśāstra* (literary theory) into Brajbhasha. They greatly facilitated the *kāvya* enterprise by writing

1. The word *rīti* literally means "way" or "method" but is in the context of Hindi literary history perhaps best translated as "classical" or even "neoclassical." The term is used to characterize the complex, Sanskritizing tendencies of courtly Brajbhasha literature. Although *rīti* is a *tatsama*, its early modern Braj usage should not be confused with the word's earlier semantic life in Sanskrit literary theory (such as the *rīti* doctrine espoused by Vāmana).

poetics manuals known as *rītigranth* (books of method). The *rītigranth* genre became astoundingly popular: not just poets but kings, aristocrats, the intelligentsia, and connoisseurs from merchant communities were keen to partake of the new Braj *kāvya*. In addition to writing theoretical works, *rīti* authors deepened the Braj poetic repertoire by adopting, and adapting, Sanskrit literary styles. *Muktaka* (freestanding) poems on *śṛṅgāra* (erotic) and *praśasti* (political) themes, staples of the Sanskrit literary assembly, were re-tooled by *rīti* poets for their patrons. A few *rīti* authors also took up the challenge of writing extended works of *prabandha kāvya*.

However obviously rooted in traditions of Sanskrit *kāvya, rīti* literary culture also had specifically vernacular concerns and features. The cultivation of Hindi narrative forms by both Sufis and Jains since at least the fourteenth century had paved some of the way for aspirants to vernacular *kāvya*. Vaishnava devotion was a major inspiration, both spiritual and poetic, for many courtly authors of the Mughal period; the Rajasthani performance traditions known as *diṅgal* and the popular *rāso* (martial ballad) genre added new local inflections to the repertoire. Although not unrelated to the *rāso*, or indeed to the earlier Sanskrit poems foregrounding *vīra rasa* (the heroic sentiment), we see a heightened interest in historical *kāvya* in our period that can be considered a new characteristic of the early modern vernacular polity.[2] Moreover, while *rīti* texts contain many lexical and thematic features that demonstrably hark back to classical Sanskrit *kāvya*, the texts also bear unmistakable signs of their Mughal-period provenance. In short, the *rīti* aesthetic is a unique blend of the old and the new; it mixes cosmopolitan Sanskrit with more local narrative and lexical registers; here and there we also see Islamicate touches. By adapting to a range of literary, cultural, and political changes the authors of *rīti* texts were able to reach new audiences and serve the evolving cultural needs of courtly communities.

Like Sanskrit court poetry before it, *rīti kāvya* in Brajbhasha was a critical component of the aesthetic and political program of Indian kings. In this essay I look at three specific instances of vernacular *kāvya* commissioned by Rajputs (regional Hindu rulers) who were critically allied with Mughal power, serving as *manṣabdār*s or high-ranking officials in the administration. The first two are lively narratives about leading Rajput kings who served the cause of the empire during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir: Narottam Kavi's *Māncarit* (Biography of Man Singh, c. 1595), and Keśavdās's *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* (Biography of Bir Singh Deo Bundela, 1607). My third case study is a work of *alaṅkāraśāstra* that serves

2. On the new importance of historical texts generally in western India during this period, perhaps a byproduct of the encounter with the Mughal documentary state, see Ziegler 1976; Saran and Ziegler 2001.

to showcase the *muktaka* style of Brajbhasha court poetry: the *Lalitlalām* (Finest Lover, 1660s?) of Matirām Tripāṭhī, which was dedicated to King Bhao Singh of Bundi. All three authors are indebted to longstanding traditions of Sanskrit *kāvya* but at the same time employ their vernacular medium in distinctly new ways, and one concern is to highlight some of the interesting literary and linguistic textures of these works. Another is to discover how Braj authors positioned their texts in relation to earlier Sanskrit *kāvya*s. Since all three works feature Rajput kings who served as Mughal administrators, it will also be instructive to consider some of their political valences.

B. New Directions in Indian *Kāvya*: The *Māncarit* of Narottam Kavi

Since the medieval period, the regional courts of western India had given literary shape to their courtly aspirations by patronizing works in a variety of languages, including Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, Old Gujarati, and Rajasthani. With the growing popularity of Brajbhasha from the sixteenth century, poets would increasingly adopt the new literary idiom, but the change did not occur overnight. Many Rajput kings of the Mughal period continued to sponsor Sanskrit writers as well as Rajasthani poets working in a different vernacular register from their Braj counterparts. Narottam Kavi's *Māncarit* might be considered a proto-*rīti* text in that the author has not fully acclimated to the Braj that courtly literati everywhere were in the process of adopting. He chose to mix verses in Rajasthani and Braj and even included a half dozen Sanskrit poems in his work, as though he could not quite make up his mind what *kāvya* should look like. However we might characterize the *Māncarit*'s slightly eclectic linguistic profile, the work is a splendid early example of the reinvention of *kāvya* at the regional courts of Mughal India.

The subject of Narottam's *kāvya*, which he presents to his readers as a *carita* or idealized biography, is not just any king. Man Singh Kachhwaha was arguably the leading Rajput king of his day. He grew up at the Mughal court and had a spectacularly successful career as one of Akbar's most esteemed generals. We know a prodigious amount about Man Singh from Persian sources, particularly his military exploits in the northwest and subsequently as governor of Bihar and then Bengal, where his promotion in 1601 to the rank of 7000 meant that for at least a brief time Man Singh was ranked higher than any other Mughal noble.[3] His outstanding architectural legacy—Man Singh avidly built temples, mosques, and palaces wherever he was posted—has also been

3. As noted by H. Blochmann in *Ā'īn-i akbarī* Vol 1, p. 363.

much discussed.[4] Little known to cultural historians of this period, however, is the figure of Man Singh as presented in vernacular *kāvya*s. Few would even be aware that we have *kāvya* works about him.[5]

In fact, two surviving *kāvya*s go by the name of *Māncarit*. Like so many works of the genre, both tack in interesting ways between historical and literary imperatives. I have discussed elsewhere the earlier *Māncarit* (1585), by one Amṛt Rāi. This shorter work has more of a Rajasthani profile, although there are some Brajbhasha verses mixed in.[6] The second work, under consideration here, is Narottam's longer and more thematically wide-ranging *Māncarit*, which, while not detailing every aspect of Man Singh's long and distinguished career as a Mughal *manṣabdār*, does more justice to the designation *carit*.[7] Narottam's *Māncarit* is not dated, but we can be certain that the poet was a contemporary of Man Singh (d. 1614) since he explicitly mentions leaving Rampura (a small kingdom to the south adjacent to Mewar, now in the state of Madhya Pradesh) for Amber, drawn by the king's charisma and also—the poet makes clear—the chance to further his financial prospects by presenting him with a *kāvya*.[8] Since Narottam's *Māncarit* contains no details about Man Singh subsequent to his career as governor of Bihar (Man Singh's sphere of operation was transferred from Bihar to Bengal in 1594), it seems likely that the work was written close to that date.

Let us first examine how the author introduces his *kāvya*. It is certainly a trope among Indian poets to decry their inadequacy, and here Narottam Kavi finds himself in the company of no less than Kālidāsa,[9] but Narottam seems

4. See Asher 1992, 1995; "Śeṣ viśeṣ kiṃcit," in *Māncaritāvalī*, ed. Bahura: 46–67; Case, ed., 1996.

5. As observed by Bhadani 1992, Rajput literature is an underutilized resource for Mughal historians.

6. Busch 2012.

7. Although the text's editor Gopalnarayan Bahura uses the designation *Māncarit rāso* the author himself simply entitles his work *Māncarit*. *Māncarit*, vv. 19, 36–37, 43, 431–32.

8. *Māncarit*, vv. 47–48. Cf. Bahura 1990, 21.

9. Kālidāsa introduces one of his *mahākāvya*s with the self-deprecating remarks:

kva sūryaprabhavo vaṃśa, kva cālpaviṣayā matiḥ/
titīrṣur dustaraṃ mohād uḍupenāsmi sāgaram//
mandaḥ kaviyaśaḥprārthī gamiṣyāmy upahāsyatām/
prāṃśulabhye phale lobhād udbāhur iva vāmanaḥ//

(An incommensurable distance gapes between the solar race and the limited capacity of my intellect/Deluded, I wish to cross on a raft an ocean difficult of passage// Stupid, I seek a poet's fame but will surely find myself a laughing-stock/I'm like a dwarf stretching his arms to reach a fruit that can only be obtained by the tall). *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.2–3.

actually to be suffering from a crisis of confidence in view of several passages from the introduction that far exceed the standard professions of humility, as when he describes his limited expressive powers in the face of Sarasvatī's grandeur as being akin to "a frog without a tongue."[10] Here he plays on a well-attested negative comparison between Viṣṇu's serpent companion Śeṣanāga, who has 1,000 tongues, and mortal poets who have only one tongue with which to express themselves, the twist here being that pathetic Narottam lacks the speech organ altogether. Other less than flattering self-characterizations include "mūrikhu" (*mūrkha*, fool) and "matikhīnu" (*matikṣīṇa*, devoid of intelligence).[11]

Perhaps it was to redress the shortcomings rued in this piteous *recusatio* that Narottam sought an extra measure of divine intervention for the successful realization of his poetic aims through a prolix array of opening *maṅgalācaraṇs* and *stutis*. As though to cover all the theological bases, the poet supplements the usual paeans to Gaṇeśa and Sarasvatī with an elaborate series of invocations to the goddess, Viṣṇu (including two *daśāvatāra* sequences), Śiva, and Gaṅgā Devī. The work doesn't even get underway until more than 40 verses in, which feels like a slow start when the total verse count is 432. Perhaps as a fledgling vernacular poet he felt he needed all the help he could get.[12] Narottam also sought the blessings of the earlier poetic tradition in the following *kavi-praśaṃsā* (praise of poets):

> Many poets have inhabited the earth, consider them to be gods.
> Nobody is the equal of Vyāsa. Revere Kālidāsa.
> Bring to mind Vararuci, clever Māgha; remember Bilhaṇa
> and Jayadeva, whose devotion was rewarded with a vision of the lord.
> Immortal is the name Govardhana,
> Cand [Bardāī] created vernacular poetry.
> I worshipped them all and, receiving their grace (*pāiya prasādu*),
> I have recounted the virtues of Man Singh in a biography.[13]

Narottam's apotheosis of past poets is underscored by the placement of the *kavi-praśaṃsā* amidst a raft of *maṅgalācaraṇs* and his telling use of the term *prasādu* (Sanskrit, *prasāda*), which had distinctly religious overtones in the climate of north Indian *bhakti*. The verse provides insight into how a vernacular poet writing at the turn of the seventeenth century conceptualized the literary past.

10. *Kavi dādura ika jīha bina, Māncarit*, v. 8.

11. *Māncarit*, vv. 25–26.

12. *Māncarit*, vv. 1–18; 41–42. Of course the poet's complex theological stance may also reflect the remarkable array of religious choices available in the region in this period. Monika Horstmann notes that Amber had four state deities (2002, 145).

13. *Māncarit*, v. 19.

Although he omits the quintessential *ādikavi* or "first poet" Vālmīki, whose name heads many *kavi-praśaṃsā* lists, Narottam situates his own poetic efforts in a very clear lineage of *kāvya* luminaries.[14] While Vyāsa and Kālidāsa (a conveniently rhyming pair—Braj poets were always looking for a good rhyme) would be expected to prevail over such a list, note how Narottam Kavi does include Bilhaṇa, the author, of the Sanskrit historical *kāvya Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.[15] He also permits one vernacular poet to gatecrash the gathering: Cand Bardāī, credited with the authorship of the *Pṛthvīrājrāso*. The presence here of Cand Bardāī is both a nod to local Rajasthani traditions and a telling sign that vernacular poets could now assert claims to membership in an elite group no longer confined to Sanskrit writers.

Apparently the *prasāda* of past poets—even that of a vernacular one—did not prove adequate to shore up the poet's shaky ego. He succumbs to another fit of despair: "My heart became set on writing *kāvya*, but I couldn't even string together one letter."[16] Fortunately the merciful goddess Sarasvatī comes to the rescue. She appears to the poet in a dream to assuage his feelings of insecurity and to convince him that he is, in fact, capable of writing *kāvya*. Indeed, one could even say she "commands" him to write it: on two occasions Narottam refers to his Devī's injunction to write as a *ḥukam*, using not the language of *bhakti* with its stress on divine grace but an Islamicate administrative term.[17] The goddess's intervention is successful. Upon being granted her *darśan* the poet finds himself miraculously blessed with literary ability.

Although the poet shows reverence for the classical *kāvya* past and diffidence in the face of the literary giants in whose footsteps he finds himself limping along, the *Māncarit* both can and cannot be assessed in terms of its congruence with Sanskritic norms. On the one hand, the poet is acutely aware that he is writing in the *mahākāvya* tradition, which had a time-honored role in memorializing the deeds of kings for posterity:

> Countless master poets (*kavirājā*) of old composed *mahākāvya*s.
> As time marches forward kings pass away but their deeds are heard in this world,

14. Sheldon Pollock 1995 has approached the *kavi-praśaṃsā* genre as an index of literary canonization from within the Sanskrit tradition. Verses of this type also display an awareness of historical chronology. On the general notion of Vālmīki as the *ādikavi* see Pollock 2006, 75–89.

15. I owe this insight to Cynthia Talbot.

16. *Māncarit*, v. 22 (*jiya meṃ kāba karana kī pāi, akhkhara eku na juraī āi*). For the sake of clarity, here and in other citations from this text I have made slight modifications to the orthography (such as changing ṣa to kha and standardizing the representation of nasals).

17. *Māncarit*, v.23, 32. Cf. v. 90. On similar topoi associated with vernacular beginnings see Pollock 2006, 309–16.

enduring in an [imperishable poetry-] body.
Their names are still heard, as though they inhabited this place, that house.
In the Kaliyug, what other means is there to propagate the fame of the deserving?
Man Singh of the Kurambha[18] lineage,
may your fame remain on this earth.[19]

The *carit*'s general architecture and literary techniques would certainly be familiar to any reader of classical poetry: the aura of royal *praśasti* that pervades the work; set pieces like a *nagara-varṇana* (description of the city) of the Kachhwaha capital at Amber or a portrait of the royal women in *nakh-śikh* (toe-to-head description) style; the imagined sexual delights of the *nāyaka* (hero) in traditional *śṛṅgāra* modes; his heroic exploits in vivid battle scenes infused with *vīra rasa*. These are fairly generic ingredients of *kāvya* and could just as easily have been written a millennium before. However, the work also bears unmistakable signs of literary newness. Narottam does not allow us to forget that his is a *Hindi kāvya*. Occasionally a modern reader of some of the more obscure Rajasthani portions of the text might beg to differ, but the poet himself saw his mission as one of writing "in simple language, so that everybody can understand."[20] In one of the introductory verses where he explicitly mentions the classical *rasa*s or literary moods (in this case *śṛṅgāra, vīra, karuṇa, adbhuta* and *hāsa*, or the erotic, heroic, pitiful, fantastic, and comic) that inform his work, he also trumpets its distinctive non-Sanskrit meters including the *dohā, caupāī*, and *arill* (he uses many others, as well).[21] Nor does one have to look very hard to spot major shifts in literary orientation. We have already alluded to the deep religiosity of the work's preface, which is very much a product of its early modern *bhakti* milieu. Numerous other changes can be detected.

Narottam evidently did not feel at ease with some of the *kāvya* models that he had inherited. One of the expectations for a classical *nāyaka* is to display not just martial but also sexual prowess. From his location at a Rajput court of circa 1600 where seclusion of women was the norm, Narottam seems deeply ambivalent about the expectation that he should celebrate the beauty of Man Singh's queens. Before embarking on this unsettling *śṛṅgārik* mission the poet prudishly invokes the following Sanskrit *śloka*:

lakṣmī mātā śivā mātā mātā ca brahmaputrikā
rājñaḥ patnī guroḥ patnī svamātā mātaraḥ smṛtāḥ

18. This (alongside its variant Kurma) is a traditional title of the Kachhwaha kings of Amber.

19. *Māncarit*, v. 88. Daṇḍin makes similar remarks in *Kāvyādarśa*, 1.5.

20. *Sūdhī bhāṣā cāli arathu sabahī je pāvahiṃ*, v. 37. G. N. Bahura has also drawn attention to these lines in Bahura 1990, 21.

21. *Māncarit*, v. 36–37.

Lakṣmī is a mother, Pārvatī is a mother, and so is the daughter of Brahmā.
The king's wife, one's guru's wife—these are to be considered one's own mother.[22]

Through this display of maternal reverence he evidently wants his readers to understand that the highly sexualized imagery he employs derives from the conventions of the genre and not from any improper personal feelings toward his patron's wives. As though needing to underscore this point, he twice mentions that his descriptions of the king's women are "just by inference" (*unamāna*, Sanskrit *anumāna*), even hinting that he studied *kāvya* works like the *Naiṣadhacarita* in order to be able to write these intimate details about the harem.[23]

Whatever classical texts our studious poet might have mined, he often resorts to distinctly more contemporary techniques. Of the three poets considered in this essay, Narottam was the most drawn to composing intensively descriptive scenes modeled on local bardic styles. A lively sequence in the lilting *nārāc* meter is a typical *nakh-śikh* of the royal women fashioned in completely atypical language and meter. It begins:

calai ti cāla cālahi, sabai ju haṃsa-bāla hī
caranna ratta jāvakaṃ, su kāṃma-keli-pāvakaṃ
dipai anopa piṇḍurī, ji kāṃma-keli-iṇḍurī
jugalla jaṅgha rambha ye, manau kanaka khambha ye
su kaṭṭi hīna rājahī, ti kiṅkanī virājahī
gambhīra nābhi pekhiye, ti kāṃma-rūpa lekhiye...

The women strut about with the gait of young geese,
Their feet are reddened by henna, a fire to flare up love-play;
Calves of singular splendor, a stable ground from which to mount passion,
These thighs of delight, shaped like plantain-tree trunks, recall golden columns.
Their slim waists look beautiful, encircled by bands of bells.
Behold their deep navels, wells of desire...[24]

The point of this verse, which is best appreciated when read out loud in the original since its expressive power derives predominantly from its phonic effects,

22. *Māncarit*, v. 92.

23. *Māncarit*, v. 91, 93. Such stylized literary descriptions are—and this may be no coincidence—in keeping with the mostly non-representational nature of Rajput portraiture. On the general suppression of individual features in favor of stylized portraits, see Aitken 2002.

24. *Māncarit*, v. 94.

is to evoke the bustle of the women's quarters of the palace, a place of consummate joy and pleasure for the king and a needed diversion from his taxing military duties. While metrical variation is of course an important component of Sanskrit *kāvya*—it helps to delineate scenes, mark emphases, and generally sustains the reader's interest over the course of a long work—Narottam in this case capitalizes on the special linguistic and poetic resources available to him as a vernacular poet. His technique is often to supplement shorter workaday meters (usually *dohā*s and *arill*s in Braj) with digressions into more expansive Rajasthani verse forms that were conditioned by the domain of oral performance. These segments help to conjure up a particular type of atmosphere—in this case, the world of the harem—and also to create auditory interest.

Some of the most dramatic irruptions of vernacular bardic style into the text are not in the boudoir, however, but on the battlefield. Indeed, one of the primary ways we know we are in the sixteenth century and not the sixth is that the *nāyaka* Man Singh is constantly fighting the Mughal wars. This *kāvya*—in addition to its literary features—also epitomizes a new type of history that was produced in great abundance at the Rajput courts of early modern India. Narottam includes, for instance, a long section devoted to Man Singh's storied encounter with the Mewar king Rana Pratap Singh at the battle of Haldighati in 1576. An adequate analysis of the truth claims of this text—there are considerable divergences from the better known Mughal records—regarding this celebrated historical event, which Colonel James Tod once referred to as "Mewar's Thermopylae",[25] requires an essay of its own. Here I wish to focus on the innovative formal and linguistic features of the work, especially Narottam's facility with styles from Rajasthani poetics. The following verse in the *bhujaṅgprayāt* (the name suggests the motions of a cobra) meter captures perfectly the clamor of Man Singh's army en route to Mewar with its emphasis on the soundscape of the battlefield.

bhaī dhundhi dhundhe, ju dhundhe disānam, baje ṭāma ṭāmanti ṭhāmaṃ nisānaṃ
uṛī renu gainaṃ lupyau teja bhānam, bajī bhāgamai rāga kedāra tānaṃ
huī sindhumai sindhu āsā ti ānaṃ, bhayau rāgamai rāgu mārū amānaṃ
milī fauja faujaṃ riṅgī thāna thānaṃ, saje aṅga aṅgeni jodhā juvānaṃ
gahe bāna kammāna bedhanti tacchī, uḍai gainu pankhī su baiṭhe baracchī
huvau cakka sauṃ cakka vīyoga[26] *ānaṃ, huī hāka hākaṃ na būjhanti kānaṃ*
kiye mukhkha rāte na dīsai bhalānaṃ, cale kāiaraṃ āpu kīne palānaṃ...

25. As noted by Talbot 2007, 23.

26. Emended from "cakkavī yoga" in the printed text. Chakva birds are held to endure separation from their mates at night.

tupakke havāī na jānauṃ avājaiṃ, calī nāragārī chuṭe megha gājaiṃ
kuhakkai ru jambūru sammūha sāje, gahai khagga jāganta svāmitta kājai

Dust clouds dimmed the view in every direction, war drums blared.
The dust rose to the heavens, blocking the sunlight.
The auspicious notes of Rag Kedar warded off doom.
The strains of Rag Sindhu resounded everywhere, Rag Maru brimmed forth.[27]
Squadrons merged as the forces marched forth from halt to halt.
The soldiers were all decked out in armor, bows at the ready, arrows flying.
Birds flew away in terror, taking refuge in the trees.
[mistaking day for night] Chakva birds separated from their lovers.
Who could hear a thing above the deafening din of battle?
With their blood-spattered faces, who could see properly?
The faint of heart went running ...
Cannons exploded, fiery arrows flared, you wouldn't believe the racket!
Explosions roared like thunderclouds,
Missiles and the camel-mounted guns were in full force,
Soldiers, swords drawn, were keen to serve their sovereign.[28]

We are swept up into the action, mesmerized by the commotion of men, elephants, and horses, the whirring of arrows, the exploding of cannons. Older *kāvya* images (the dust kicked up by war animals, which blocks the sun, is an ancient one) blend in with the terminology of the Mughal military machinery: its *fauj* (Persian for "army," here translated as squadron) and newfangled weaponry like the *havāī* ("airborne," arrows propelled in the air by means of gun powder[29]), an Arabic word modified with a Persian suffix. Some of the effects are also folksy and even humorous, as when the pusillanimous enemy soldiers scamper to get out of the fray. But the real literary bravado stems from Narottam's masterful manipulation of *vaiṇa sagāī* (kindred sounds), an alliterative technique characteristic of *diṅgal* poetry. Sanskrit poets were of course not strangers to alliteration—Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* is a case in point from very early in the *kāvya* tradition—but *vaiṇa sagāī* functions slightly differently.[30] It is a

27. The word Maru refers to an Indian melodic structure but it also means war drum, desert, and death, all appropriate to a battle scene as conceived by a poet from Rajasthan.

28. *Māncarit*, v. 213.

29. I rely heavily on Bahura's glosses of the weaponry in *Māncarit*, pp. 255–56.

30. On Subandhu's use of alliterative compounding see Bronner 2010, 33–38, and also Chapter 9 in this Volume. The subtle workings of *vaiṇa sagāī* are helpfully elucidated in Kamphorst 2008, 89–108.

sophisticated expressive technique of oral poetry, not written prose, and it works by intensifying the rhyme (itself not very common in Sanskrit literature) through the supercharged layering of structured repetitions, assonance, and stress patterns. Its hypnotic, tension-building effects are ideal for setting the scene, as in this lead-up to the battle at Haldighati.

Akbar's army comes in for a particularly rich, expansive treatment in another diṅgalesque passage that stresses ethnic diversity. Descriptions of the army are a *kāvya* staple, and had been used earlier in Sanskrit poetry to signal a powerful transregional political culture.[31] An early modern writer like Narottam is likewise interested in a conception of power that encompasses vast geographic reach but his showcasing of military cosmopolitanism may also evince a tinge of othering as in this verse, also in *bhujaṅgprayāt* meter, which consists mostly of an intentionally bewildering list of ethnic groups:

caḍhe saṅga sevā ju rūmī ruhele mile koṭi kābilli sohai akele
daye muṇḍa tāṣī ju sāṣī ti sohai, laye hātha kammānna ammānna mohai
cakattā ujabakka ikka atagge, ji ṣandhī nilāī firaṅgī kalaṅge
ruhele ruhammī ru hammī suhānnī, habassī hasammā juhannī sravānnī
turakkānna makkānna pannī pavaṅge, sahānī juhannī khuresī sapaṅge
niyāji ti kājī subhai sūra sāde, kasalle masīnī jure seṣajāde
paṭhānam amānaṃ bhile tega gorī, mile loha lodī su kambo ti korī
ghane saṅga keūka lahora lambe, kaḍhai tega vegaṃ ji ammāna jhumme
kijalvāsa muṇḍam ginai ko nilaṅge, mulattānna cukkī tite āi aṅge

The extreme verbal acrobatics thwart any attempt at translation; the sounds are the sense. The highly structured incantatory effects of the original create a sense of relentless marching, conjuring up a massive, indomitable army assembled from the Muslim territories to the northwest (Kabulis, Pathans, Lahoris, Multanis—the list is long and complicated). Aside from the wonderful atmospherics—often the bardic meters are called into service for richly suggesting the mood of an event rather than merely narrating it—Narottam also probably intends a satirical effect. He needed to modify the names of all these foreign groups in accordance with Hindi phonetic and metrical principles (thus Chaghtai becomes *Cakattā*, Uzbek *Ujabakka*, Qureshi *Khuresi*, Turks *Turakkānna*, etc.) but some of these derivations sound ludicrous; rhymes and playful touches like "paṭhānam amānaṃ" (countless Pathans!) and "keūka lahora lambe" (all those tall Lahoris!) also contribute to the humor. As with the royal women, Narottam doesn't claim real knowledge of his subject matter, capping the passage with the

31. Pollock 2006, 246.

remark, "the Muslims (*meccha*, Sanskrit *mleccha*) of the earth have many castes (*jāti*), Hindus know nothing about them!"[32]

While the main narrative point here and elsewhere in this *kāvya* is that the heroic *nāyaka* Man Singh is indispensable to Akbar, a stalwart general leading the Mughal troops steadily from victory to victory—and this is of course the main documentary value of the poem—the text also offers the chance to study the look and feel of the Mughal Empire from the point of view of those more peripheral to its workings, such as a Brahmin court poet resident at Amber who perhaps had little experience of distant people and places on the northwestern frontier. Narottam leaves no doubt about his feelings toward the emperor, whom he portrays almost reverently as a great patron of Hindus and even something of an honorary Hindu. The poet especially approves of Akbar's personal habits and policies: he worships Viṣṇu and bathes in *gaṅgājal* (Ganges water); he does not sanction the killing of animals; he has repealed the taxes on Hindu places of worship. "This is Hindu rule, who says it is Turk?" editorializes Narottam, adding "[Akbar] loves Hindus, he's turned against the Turks." The poet goes so far as to claim that Akbar is an incarnation of Arjuna, the celebrated warrior from the *Mahābhārata*, whose chariot was driven by Kṛṣṇa in the great clash between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. In Narottam's estimation it was the Pāṇḍava hero's terrible sin of killing his clan that caused him to be reincarnated as Akbar, taking a "demon [that is, Muslim] birth" (*asura janamu*).[33]

Caugān (polo), a favorite pastime of Akbar, also comes in for brief literary treatment. A *nagara-varṇana* of Amber mentions its polo grounds and the subject of polo comes up on several occasions, as when Akbar invites Man Singh to a match.[34] As though needing to explain this detail, Narottam says, *kali ke kuṃvara khilahiṃ caugāna* (the princes of the Kaliyuga play polo), clarifying that it can be considered an appropriate pastime for a Hindu king and thus rightly merits mention in a *kāvya* about a royal personage.[35] The contemporary Mughal view of polo is helpfully elucidated by Akbar's court historian and ideologue Abū al-Faẓl, whose *Ā'īn-i akbarī* is a detailed account of various contemporary practices and institutions:

> His Majesty devises means of amusement, and makes his pleasures a means of testing the character of men... Superficial observers look

32. *Māncarit*, v. 231–32.

33. *Māncarit*, vv. 123–25. Akbar's interest in vegetarianism is also much discussed in the Persian chronicles of his reign. See *Ā'īn-i akbarī* Vol 1, pp. 64–65, 164, 176 and *Muntakhab al-tavārīkh* Vol. 2, p. 331.

34. References to polo can be found in *Māncarit*, vv. 56, 69, 139, 274.

35. *Māncarit*, v. 68. The title *kuṃvar* (Sanskrit *kumāra*) refers specifically to Hindu princes.

> upon this game as a mere amusement and consider it mere play; but men of more exalted views see in it a means of learning promptitude and decision. It tests the value of a man, and strengthens bonds of friendship. Strong men learn in playing this game the art of riding; and the animals learn to perform feats of agility and to obey the reins. Hence His Majesty is very fond of this game. Externally, the game adds to the splendour of the Court; but viewed from a higher point, it reveals concealed talents.[36]

Abū al-Faẓl stresses both the physical and moral virtues of the game that give it a rightful place in Mughal court culture. Man Singh had been attending the court since his youth and would certainly have imbibed this Mughal perspective on the game, and thus the Persianate practice of *caugān* also found a place both in his native city of Amber and in *kāvya* produced under his patronage.

Other concessions to Persian culture in the *Māncarit* can be gauged from the work's language textures. Despite writing poetry in one of the premier Sanskrit genres, Narottam selectively employs Perso-Arabic and Turkish words, sometimes in highly marked ways. (We have already noted scenes where Devī was giving the poet a *ḥukam*). A few common Persianized phrases, like *makhamalla firaṅgiya jeba* ("beautiful foreign velvet") are associated with the early modern textile trade but also clearly have royal and military connotations (in the case of caparisoned horses).[37] As already intimated, the idiom of warfare is frequently non-Sanskritic, in keeping with the Mughal context, hence the prevalence of words like *jang* (battle), *tīr* (arrow), and *topcī* (cannoneer). Occasionally the poet forges unexpected compounds that playfully mix Sanskrit and Persian. Thus in a *śṛṅgārik* scene Narottam laments the depredations of *manamātha-fauj* (Kāmadeva's army), deftly combining Sanskrit "perturber of the heart" with the Persian word for army; in depicting a battle he celebrates an indomitable warrior with the epithet *mahājor* (of great force), combining the Sanskrit word "great" with Persian *zor* (strength, Brajified to *jor*).[38]

The dramatic choice of Persian over Sanskrit vocabulary in some scenes, while frequently conditioned by the exigencies of the early modern economic and military environment, is also, less mechanistically, driven by literary imperatives. One of these is straightfoward, the penchant for end rhyme in Braj poetry—the ability to use Persian words dramatically increases the stock of possibilities. The other is subtler, the desire to impart a Mughal feel to particular portions of the *kāvya*. In passages requiring Akbar's direct speech, for instance,

36. *Ā'īn-i akbarī* Vol. 1, pp. 308–9.

37. *Māncarit*, v. 280. Similar phrases are found in vv. 75, 219.

38. *Māncarit*, vv. 153, 376.

the poet seems to go out of his way to employ a kind of pidgin Persian, as though to mimic the expected register of a Muslim king. Perhaps humorous effects were also intended: in a scene where Man Singh is summoned to lend his assistance in suppressing Rana Pratap Singh of Mewar (a prelude to the celebrated Haldighati incident mentioned earlier), the emperor says he is concerned about having received many "petitions," expressed as *firādi* (from Persian *faryād*).[39] The poet then cleverly concocts a verse in which he manages to rhyme the distinctly non-Braj phrase *dara hāla* (*dar ḥāl* is Persian for "in this state"), with *sāhi jalāla*, a Brajification of Akbar's regnal title Shah Jalaluddin.[40]

One of the most poignant passages in the work, and an exceptionally good example of Narottam's use of Persianized Braj, reports the death of Akbar's beloved minister Birbal, whose squadron was ambushed by the Yousufzais in a grim turn of events during the northwestern campaigns of the 1580s. Akbar is depicted gravely in a *darbār* scene (Perso-Arabic words marked in bold type):

baiṭhe hute ***sāhi dīvāna,***
ṭhāḍhe mecha jite dhara ***khāna***
aurau rāuta rājā rāi, bhaī ***firādi*** *tahāṃ kī āi*
sāhi hajūra *bulāi kai, pūchī hai taba bāta*
ko jajhyā ko ūbaryā, loha lagyā kisa gāta
taba vaha bolai bola ***sāhi suvihāna*** *jū*
saba ***patisāhī fauja*** *gaī tihiṃ ṭhāna jū*
aisā ***juluma khudāi*** *na kāhū dekhiyā*

The emperor was seated in the royal court,
the earth's Mlecchas and Khans stood around him,
as did all the Raos and Rajas.
Just then a petition from there (the Northwest) was brought to his attention.
The shah called in his attendant, and asked what was the matter:
"Who died, and who was saved? Who has been wounded?"
He (the attendant) said these words, "Blessed majesty,
all the imperial forces were lost.
I've never seen such a catastrophic manifestation of divine will."[41]

This Persianizing technique (and there are many other examples of it both in this text and elsewhere in Brajbhasha court poetry[42]) is a special feature of early

39. *Māncarit*, 205. A similar type of Persianization occurs in vv. 146–47.

40. *Māncarit*, v. 207.

41. *Māncarit*, vv. 317–19.

42. Persianized Braj style is a well-attested feature of *rīti* poetics. For a brief discussion, see Busch 2010, 89–92.

modern Hindi *kāvya* and one not easily available to Sanskrit writers, whose medium—long heralded for its linguistic purity as "the refined language" or, more grandiosely, "the language of the gods"—could not use "mleccha" words with anywhere near the same prodigality.

If the writers of early modern Hindi *kāvya* were engaging with cosmopolitan Persian, we also have the sense that Sanskrit, India's other cosmopolitan language, was losing some of its linguistic hold. This is not to deny its critical importance to the vernacular *kāvya* enterprise. We have already discussed the privileging of Sanskrit writers in Narottam's *kavi-praśaṃsā*, and as a Brahmin court poet he approached his literary task with one foot firmly planted in the soil of classical literary culture.[43] The *Māncarit* even contains the occasional *śloka* in the language of the gods (one was cited earlier), although several are riddled with errors, and with a frequency that makes it difficult to ascribe them to scribal incompetence. This suggests that the poet was much more comfortable in a vernacular medium.[44]

Narottam's *Māncarit*—both stylistically and substantively—is recognizably *kāvya*, of course, but it is at the same time profoundly unfamiliar. Braj meters, the aural pyrotechnics of Rajasthani bards, the descriptions of Mughal armies and the routine use of Persian words in Mughal scenes, *apabhraṣṭa* Sanskrit—all contribute to a more hybrid Hindi literary ethos. Something was shifting in a world where vernacular literati were beginning to assert themselves. A new type of *kāvya* in a rich vernacular idiom was in the making—and it was here to stay.

C. The Self-presentation of the Orchha Court in the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* of Keśavdās

The next major work of Hindi *kāvya* to be commissioned at a *manṣabdār*'s court was Keśavdās's *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, also known as *Vīrcarit*. It was written in 1607 and thus only about a decade after the *Māncarit*, but it indexes a dramatic leap forward in the development of Brajbhasha literary culture. The Braj *carita* genre, which also had some currency in *bhakti* circles, had become an important

43. Aside from the poets overtly mentioned in his *kavi-praśaṃsā* Narottam also refers to the *Naiṣadhacarita* of Śrīharṣa, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, the *Amaruśataka*, and the *Bhāvaśataka*. See *Māncarit*, vv. 71, 91.

44. Incorrect Sanskrit forms can be spotted in several verses that were clearly intended to be pure Sanskrit. Examples include *Māncarit*, vv. 1, 121, 272, 310. R. S. McGregor has similarly noticed incorrect Sanskrit in a Braj commentary on Bhartṛhari by King Indrajit of Orchha from approximately the same period. See McGregor 1968, 13.

mode of political expression.[45] Like Narottam's extended poem about Man Singh, the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* is a biography of a leading Rajput official—in this case Bir Singh Deo Bundela, who had a close relationship with Akbar's son Jahangir. Both works construct elaborate literary arguments about exemplary kingliness using the time-tested methods of classical *kāvya* while at the same time evincing remarkable new early modern inflections. The obvious similarities between the works may be no coincidence. Man Singh and Bir Singh Deo not only knew one another but were also in fact neighbors on the Yamuna riverfront in Agra.[46] Keśavdās also mentions that Man Singh Kachhwaha attended the Bundela king's coronation.[47] Perhaps Bir Singh was inspired by Man Singh in his choice to commission a monumental *carita*. Certainly the Bundelas, an arriviste clan from a frontier territory in the badlands of central India, were watching very closely what higher status Rajputs were doing.[48] In light of this point it seems of more than passing significance that after an opening *maṅgalācaraṇ* to Śiva, Keśavdās begins his *kāvya* with a verse that positions Bir Singh Deo third—after the Kachhwaha and Sisodia rulers—in the hierarchy of Rajput kings of his day:

> First is Raja Man Singh Kachhwaha, who conquered the seas in all his might.[49]
> Second is Rana Amar Singh Sisodia, who caused the elephants of the enemy kingdom to lose their courage.[50]

45. The *Sudāmacarita*, which tells the moving story of the reunion of Kṛṣṇa with his destitute childhood friend, was popular with Braj poets, with versions by Narottamdās (not the same as the Amber poet), Haldhar, Nanddās, and (possibly) Ālam dating from the sixteenth century. See McGregor 1984, 99–101, 194; Snell 1992.

46. Kolff 2002, 128.

47. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 33.15. Citations are to the Kishorilal edition unless otherwise specified.

48. Some aspects of Bir Singh's architectural program have been linked to prior buildings sponsored by Man Singh. See Rothfarb 2012, 66–68; 81–86. On the Bundela clan as "spurious Rajputs" whose political and cultural choices were intimately linked to social mobility, see Kolff 2002.

49. This is a slightly odd image for somebody who made his name fighting in the deserts of Kabul and Rajasthan. Keśavdās is probably gesturing toward Man Singh's career in Bengal (a period not covered by Narottam Kavi).

50. Famously, the Sisodias of Mewar were the last major Rajput clan to hold out against the Mughals and did not submit until Jahangir's reign, in 1614. The stature of Rana Amar Singh during this period is confirmed by some remarks of Jahangir, who characterized him as "one of the major landholders and rajas of Hindustan, whose chieftainship and command, and that of his fathers and forefathers, are accepted by all the rajas and rais of this land." *Jahāngīrnāmah*, p. 149.

> Third is Raja Birsingh Bundela of Orchha, whose harrowing depredations were a source of intolerable grief to Akbar.[51]
> Viṣṇu created all three kings to protect royal families and to destroy enemy dynasties.[52]

A lengthy *vaṃśāvalī* (genealogy) in the next chapter is similarly concerned with making claims about the clan's stature, tracing as it does the Bundela lineage to the Gahadavalas of Banaras and ultimately even further back to the solar dynasty of King Rāma.[53]

Like all Rajput communities since Akbar's day, the Bundelas were deeply embroiled in Mughal politics and preoccupied with securing—sometimes contesting—their position within the new imperial order. Coming to terms with Mughal hegemony was an ineluctable reality for Indian royal houses like the Kachhwahas and the Bundelas (the Sisodias of Mewar were generally a little harder to convince on this point), but this did not preclude the need to assert one's kingly stature in one's own region. Such assertions became more urgent at precisely the time when regional kings were struggling with their curtailed sovereignty under the Mughal regime. Just as Persian textual culture was critical to shaping the public face of the Mughal emperors—what is the *Akbarnāmah*, commissed by Akbar, after all, if not a *carita* of sorts about the emperor—Braj *kāvya* had an important role to play in the self-presentation of Rajput kings. The court poets of Man Singh and Bir Singh, who experimented with the resources of *kāvya* as a creative outlet while simultaneously asserting the martial prowess and kingly noblesse of their patrons, were the trendsetters in this regard.[54] Narottam tends to emphasize Man Singh's exemplary service to Akbar across the Mughal landscape—from Haldighati to Kabul to Rohtas (a capital that Man Singh built in Bihar). Keśavdās is more concerned with Bir Singh's hard-won battles at home: his struggles as a junior prince to become the king of Orchha, and why this new political arrangement is for the best.

51. Bir Singh Deo rebelled against Akbar (and against his own brother Ram Shah, see below) after allying himself with Prince Salim during the latter's against rebellion against his father. Another cause of Akbar's grief is Bir Singh's murdering of his court intellectual and cherished confidant Abū al-Faẓl.

52. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 1.2. In this last line the word "narasiṃha" is a *yamaka* meaning both "king" (lion among men) and the fourth avatar of Viṣṇu. For a slightly different translation of this verse, which entertains the intriguing possibility that Keśavdās is also here invoking the ideas of the tortoise and Hayagrīva avatars of Viṣṇu, see Pauwels 2012, 152 (and notes 51–54).

53. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 2.22ff.

54. The puzzling absence of Mewar from the Braj literary record until much later in the seventeenth century is discussed in Busch 2011, 185–88.

Keśavdās was even better positioned than Narottam to inaugurate a new style of vernacular political *kāvya*. While both poets were demonstrably conversant with the masterpieces of Sanskrit literature, Keśavdās also took a keen interest in *alaṅkāraśāstra*. He is known to this day as a major innovator in the field of Brajbhasha poetics. His *Rasikpriyā* (Handbook for poetry connoisseurs, 1591), an ingenious reworking of Rudrabhaṭṭa's Sanskrit *Śṛṅgāratilaka*, became an instant bestseller among vernacular literati. Keśavdās followed up with a *Kavipriyā* (Handbook for poets, 1601), which was based on several classical sources including Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*. He also wrote a short treatise on metrics, the *Chandamālā* (Garland of metrics, 1602). Keśavdās was just as interested in the practice of *kāvya* as he was in its theoretical foundations. He wrote three *prabandha kāvya*s for the three subjects he found particularly worthy of this type of elaborate poetic memorialization, and which thereby acquired a certain degree of equipollence: Lord Rāma, his patron Bir Singh Deo Bundela of Orchha, and the Mughal emperor Jahangir. They are treated, respectively, in his *Rāmcandracandrikā* (1601), *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* (1607), and *Jahāngīrjascandrikā* (1612). The *Rāmcandracandrikā* and *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* in particular are monumental works (numbering 39 and 33 cantos, respectively) of a length and complexity only rarely attempted by Brajbhasha poets.

Like Narottam, Keśavdās was acutely conscious of the Sanskrit past and the long shadow that it cast over aspirants to vernacular literature. In the opening to his *Rāmcandracandrikā*, a bold attempt at writing a Brajbhasha *Rāmāyaṇa* (but one whose fame was ultimately eclipsed by the slightly earlier Avadhi version of Tulsidas), Vālmīki appears to the poet in a dream, authorizing his literary mission.[55] Although Keśavdās does occasionally refer to himself as a *mandamati bhāṣākavi* (slow-witted Hindi poet),[56] he does not seem to have been subject to the same crisis of confidence that plagued Narottam. A single verse to Śiva serves as an adequate opening—the unlocking of his muse apparently required no further divine intercession—and by the third stanza of the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* we already find the poet proclaiming:

> In that city [Orchha, the Bundela capital] the wise and famous
> Keśavdās was considered an ornament to the Brahmin lineage.
> Hearing of the wondrous deeds of Bir Singh Deo, he composed a
> *prabandha* on the strength of his own intelligence.[57]

55. For a recent discussion of the *Rāmcandracandrikā*, also known as *Rāmcandrikā*, see Stasik 2009, 117–26. As she notes, one arresting update to *kāvya* imagery is the comparison between women's breasts and polo balls.

56. *Kavipriyā*, 1.17; *Rāmcandracandrikā*, 1.5.

57. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 1.3 (... *tihi pura prasiddha 'kesava' sumati, bipra-baṃsa-avataṃsa guni budhibala prabandha tini baraniyo bīra caritra bicitra sunī*).

Although he did pay lip service to the topos of writerly incompetence, Keśavdās didn't really mean it. The *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* is the sixth of his eight works, and he was already well established as a major Brajbhasha poet.[58]

Less established at this juncture was the rule of his patron Bir Singh Deo Bundela, who, with the backing of Emperor Jahangir, had recently usurped the Orchha throne from his elder brother after a series of hostilities that had led the two claimants to the brink of fratricide. I have discussed elsewhere the general importance of Keśavdās's historical poems for understanding critical events that took place at Orchha around the turn of the seventeenth century, and why Brajbhasha *kāvya* commands our attention as a source of Mughal history.[59] Keśavdās, like Narottam before him, and many other Braj poets since, combined elements of history and poetry in fascinating ways. The baseline tempo of the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* is set by the rhythms of the familiar *dohā-caupāī* popularized by earlier Avadhi poets,[60] a workaday meter that lends itself particularly well to a court historian's task of reporting. But Keśavdās also uses more elaborate meters like the *kavitt* and *chappay*, and, as we will shortly discover, is intently interested in the fine points of literary craftsmanship. He was just as much a poetician as a historian.

As for Keśavdās's approach to history, we cannot understand it without being attuned to the literary intricacies of his *kāvya*. Let us first direct our spotlight to some dramatic instances of intertextuality that come into view when we juxtapose two *kāvya*s from the poet's own oeuvre. Since Keśavdās had written a *Rāmāyaṇa* in 1601, just six years before the completion of *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, he had to hand a stock of *kāvya* compositions that celebrated ancient India's paradigmatically just king. A close reading of the *Rāmcandracandrikā* and *Vīrsiṃhdevcarita* in tandem reveals that several passages bear a striking resemblance. The poet was being neither lazy nor forgetful. He had a political point to make about the history that was unfolding before his very eyes.[61]

One virtuoso instance of Keśavdās's literary recycling epitomizes a central theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story: brotherly sacrifice and service.[62] Rāma, recently banished from Ayodhya at the ruthless Kaikeyī's insistence, has just begun his

58. His extensive career is the subject of Busch 2011, chapter 1.

59. See Busch 2005.

60. Keśavdās uses a 15-*mātrā* variant of the (16-*mātrā*) *caupāī*, known as *caupahī*.

61. For an insightful discussion of intertextuality in Sanskrit literature, including what the authors aptly term "inversive, even subversive intertextual reference," see Bronner and Shulman 2006. On Bāṇa's recontextualization of a critical passage by Subandhu, see Bronner 2010, 50–55.

62. Brotherly harmony, a *sine qua non* of peaceful dynastic succession, is in Sheldon Pollock's estimation a crucial political focus of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and one that distinguishes it from India's other great classical epic, the *Mahābhārata*. Pollock 2005, 18–22.

14-year exile and is stationed at Chitrakut en route to a more total *vanavāsa* in Dandaka forest. Rāma's younger brother Bharata, who had been conveniently absent from the court when Kaikeyī forced Daśaratha to banish his cherished first-born son and have Bharata installed on the throne instead, returns home to find Ayodhya desolate.[63] Hearing of his mother's perfidy, he refuses to become king and rushes to Chitrakut, hoping to persuade Rāma to return and resume his rightful position. Bharata's precipitous arrival in the forest is a moment of serious tension in the epic. His irascible brother Lakṣmaṇa even threatens to kill him. The dust kicked up by the horses of Bharata's retinue—reminiscent of an army approaching to do battle—cast a pall over the sky, blocking out the sun (as we saw in Narottam's poem), a turn of events given the following explanation by our poet:

> How could the sun god stand to see strife within his own family?
> Knowing this, the earth hived itself off from the sky.[64]

In Keśavdās's *Rāmāyaṇa* (as in Vālmīki's) the misconception is quickly cleared up and no battle ensues; Bharata agrees to act as Rāma's regent and takes his elder brother's sandals with him back to Ayodhya as a token of the real king's royal presence. Everybody can now breathe a sigh of relief.

No such relief mitigates the tension surrounding rightful succession in the case of Bir Singh Deo Bundela and his elder brother Ram Shah—neither in real life nor in Keśavdās's *kāvya*. Compounding the reader's discomfiture in the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* is Keśavdās's relentless use of *Rāmāyaṇa* imagery to devastating ironic effect. Since the eldest Bundela prince bears the same name, Keśavdās is readily able to suggest parallels between Ram Shah and Rāma. He recounts that, upon Akbar's death and Jahangir's accession to the Mughal throne (in 1605), there is a brief moment when the two warring brothers are poised to reconcile. Ram Shah and Bir Singh meet, and we are told that the younger brother honored his elder, "as Bharata did Rāma."[65] But this classical image of brotherly

63. Daśaratha's capitulation to Kaikeyī in passing over his first-born son was held up as a negative example for later cases of Indian dynastic succession, as when Bilhaṇa remarked, "*rāmasya pitrā bharato'bhiṣiktaḥ kramaṃ samullaṅghya yad ātmarājye/ tenothitā strījita ity akīrtir adyāpi tasyāsti digantareṣu.*" (By transgressing order and making Bharata his heir, Rāma's father went down in infamy: To this day, wherever you turn, he is known as "the pawn of women"). *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, 3.40. I am grateful to Yigal Bronner for the reference (and translation).

64. *Rāmcandracandrikā*, 10.22. Rāma and indeed many later Indian kings were considered (or wished to be considered) *sūryavaṃśī* (of the solar race).

65. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 9.54. Elsewhere Bhupal Rao, Ram Shah's nephew and ally, is tellingly compared to Rāma's trusted companions, including Hanumān, Sugrīva, Aṅgada, and Lakṣmaṇa. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 14. 2–5; 14.21.

harmony is not to be sustained. Ram Shah Bundela is disappointingly lacking in the ideal kingly qualities of his namesake, as the poet constantly reminds us.[66] The contrast between epic and reality is stark.

The *tour de force* of irony, however, is in the construction of *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* Canto 12. After a series of failed negotiations between Bir Singh and Ram Shah, the only remaining recourse is war. The poet describes the younger brother Bir Singh approaching Ram Shah's palace in an almost exact reprise of Bharata's arrival in Chitrakut in his *Rāmcandracandrikā*—with several phrases and even whole verses repeated nearly verbatim, including the one just excerpted about the sun looking on in horror at the "strife within his own family". The perverse inversion of *Rāmāyaṇa* ideals proves impossible to ignore.[67] In both the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* and real life the younger brother *does* go to war against his elder. He not only covets the throne but usurps it. Keśavdās's use of a *Rāmāyaṇa* intertext is jarring. Far from evoking the stately ideals of the epic, it serves as a telling comment on the devastating breakdown in the moral order of kingship and a dire political problem at the court epitomized by the poet's own wry remark: *rakṣaka loga te bhakṣaka bhae*, "protectors have turned predators."[68]

Let us not forget that this is a work at once of history and *kāvya*. Despite being morally unsavory and attended by a degree of authorial ambivalence, ousting Ram Shah from power is, narratively speaking, a moment of triumph for Keśavdās's hero, because the best man has won and political stability has been re-established in the kingdom. All bloodshed ceases in Canto 14, when Bir Singh, is confirmed in his authority over Orchha by Emperor Jahangir.[69] But there are nearly 20 cantos left to go. From Canto 15 the poet suddenly dispenses with the task of reporting the sometimes unseemly events that led to the removal of Bir Singh's own brother from the throne,[70] and turns wholeheartedly to a more purely *kāvya* enterprise. If this was at times difficult to achieve in real life, it is in

66. Ram Shah is generally characterized as greedy, deceitful, and lacking in both moral and physical vigor, but his lack of kingly legitimacy is perhaps nowhere more tellingly articulated than in the image of his royal luster (*rājyaśrī*) wandering from pillar to post. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 10.10. This image can be found in Bilhaṇa too. See Chapter 17 in this Volume.

67. Compare *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 12.21ff with *Rāmcandracandrikā*, 10.17ff.

68. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 14.56.

69. Keśavdās mentions the royal *farmān* (edict) in *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 14.61–63. Ram Shah, who sent a daughter to Jahangir's harem in 1610, continued to hold a *jāgīr*, and his nephew Bharat inherited the erstwhile king's title upon Ram Shah's death in 1612. See *Jahāngīrnāmāh*, 104, 140.

70. The nadir would have to be Bir Singh's murder of Abū al-Faẓl at the behest of Prince Salim, which brought the two princes into an alliance that would secure both of their political futures. For a comparison of Keśavdās's treatment of this notorious episode with how it is handled in the *Jahāngīrnāmāh* see Busch 2005, 37–43. The need to delicately manage Jahangir's own role in the incident caused considerable unease for Persian authors as well. See Alam and Subrahmanyam 2011, 133–45.

elaborate segments of poetry—a more pacific realm of literary imagination—where Bir Singh Deo can be established as an ideal king most effectively.

For the next dozen or so cantos, Keśavdās concerns himself with a rich variety of poetic sequences that help to establish his patron as a high-status royal *Kshatriya*. While Keśavdās, writing in *madhyadeśa* (central India), did not share Narottam's penchant for Rajasthani poetics, the works do share an interest in fusing the classical tools of cosmopolitan *kāvya* with more contemporary and local elements. The work straddles the realms of the Sanskrit past and the Hindi—and now deeply Mughal—present.

Keśavdās was never one to acknowledge his sources—there is no *kavi-praśaṃsā* anywhere in his oeuvre—but a reader even slightly familiar with the classics of Sanskrit literature can easily point to a wide array of intertexts in the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*. Central to the middle cantos of the work is a detailed poetic celebration of the grandeur of Orchha that proves to be a surreal combination of observed experience and literary tropes. It is quite an experience to be given a tour of the city of Orchha circa 1600, but it is difficult to shake the feeling that we are simultaneously traversing the pages of a book. The ghosts of the Sanskrit past are particularly haunting here. When Keśavdās says that the touch of the palace women's feet caused the ashoka trees to bloom in springtime is it because he had been reading Kālidāsa?[71] Did Subandhu speak through Keśavdās, who described the moonrise as: *gaganagāminī gaṅgā nīra, phūlyau puṇḍarīka so dhīra ... madana nṛpati ko gagana niketa, rajata kalasa so duvau sameta* (radiant like a white lotus blooming on the celestial Ganges... a silver vessel draped with durva grass in the heavenly mansion of King Kāmadeva).[72] Does the spirit of Harṣa hover over the *madanotsava* (spring festival) staged in Bir Singh's palace garden?[73] Do we hear an echo of Jayadeva in the luxuriant description of spring from the same canto, when Keśavdās writes the lines *taralita komala malaya samīra ...lalita lavaṅga latā hindola* (the gentle breeze of Malaya swaying... a swing nestled among the clove vines)?[74]

71. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 22.26 *carana prahārana pramudita bhae soka asokana teṃ janu gae.* The idea that the kick of a beautiful woman causes ashoka trees to blossom is widespread in Sanskrit literature. It is a central theme of the *Mālvikāgnimitra*, act three; also see *Meghadūta*, v. 75.

72. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 22.34–35. Compare the line *puṇḍarīkam iva gaganagāmigaṅgāyāḥ... rājatakalaśa iva dūrvāpravālaśabalaḥ manobhavābhiṣekasya* from *Vāsavadattā*, pp. 247–48. This parallel has been noted by Bhatnagar 1991, 255. Several other similarities in these two passages make Keśavdās's use of Subandhu's work beyond a doubt.

73. Compare the first act of *Ratnāvalī*.

74. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 22.18–19. Cf. *lalitalavaṅgalatāpariśīlanakomalamalayasamīre, Gīta-govinda*, p. 27. Although Keśavdās's phrase is an almost verbatim rendition of Jayadeva, Subandhu had used the similar tag *komala-malaya-mārutôddhūta*. This is quoted in Bronner 2010, 37.

If Keśavdās is in some important sense conversing with Sanskrit writers of the past, as readers we are also apparently eavesdropping on a conversation the Braj poet is having with himself. To tell us that Orchha is *Rāmacandra kī purī* (Lord Rāma's city) is on the one hand to make a trite observation about his patron's royal virtue.[75] On the other hand, when the poet once again builds into his *kāvya* layers of *Rāmāyaṇa* intertextuality we cannot help but wonder if he is toying with us, as when cantos 16 and 18 draw heavily on the poet's *nagara-varṇana* of Ayodhya from his own *Rāmcandracandrikā*.[76] Since it is impossible for a reader familiar with both of these *mahākāvya*s not to be struck by the parallels, one cannot but assume that the same intertextual resonances were present for contemporary audiences, too. The striking point in this case is that the *Rāmāyaṇa* intertext no longer feels subversive or ironic in its effect. We got the point that Ram Shah's governance was distinctly not *rāmrājya*. Are we now to understand that because of Bir Singh's rule Orchha has become Ayodhya? Was the performance at court of the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* in some sense a performance of the Bundela king as Lord Rāma? Of course, elsewhere in the text the poet informs us that Orchha is also Jahangirpur (city of Jahangir), a reminder that whatever argument one wanted to make about *rāmrājya*, the reality of Bundelkhandi politics at the turn of the seventeenth century was considerably more complicated.[77]

The Mughal conquest of Orchha was part of Keśavdās's own lived experience since it took place during the reign of Bir Singh's father Madhukar Shah (r. 1554–92). While this singular political fact did not have anything that could reasonably be called a transformative effect on the poet's craft, one does not have to look far to find instances of how his *kāvya* reflects some of this contemporary reality. Clearly the subject did not pique the curiosity of Keśavdās in the manner of Narottam, but the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* does contain a few lively descriptions of the Mughal army and in this text, too, there are instances of a slightly Persianized style in scenes that prominently feature the emperor or members of the Muslim nobility.[78] A description of Bir Singh's court (note that he uses the Persian word *darbār*, not the Sanskrit *sabhā*) in Canto 17 interweaves classical and Mughal

75. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 18.5; in a later verse (18.29) the poet describes Bir Singh Deo Bundela's minister Kanhardas as "a friend, like Vasiṣṭha was to Daśaratha, Viśvamitra to Rāmacandra".

76. A sampling of comparable passages is *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 16.3–7; 16.10; 16.13–18; 18.9–12 with (respectively) *Rāmcandracandrikā*, 1.38–40; 1.29; 8.3–5; 1.48–50.

77. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 14.61. 18.22.

78. In *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 12.16, for instance, Keśavdās calls attention to the variable complexions of the soldiers: the light-skinned Turks and darker Hindus. In a passage where Akbar dispatches troops to bring Bir Singh in line he uses a similar register to that employed by Narottam for the Birbal episode referenced earlier (vv. 3.14–16).

symbols of political authority: if kingly charity (*dāna*) and administering justice (*nyāu*, that is, *nyāya*) are old, the branding of horses (Persian *dāgh*) and the suggestion of a paper bureaucracy (*daftar*) are new.[79] Some other "Mughal updates" to *kāvya* norms include a chess game (*shatranj*) mentioned in a description of the harem, which also sports a range of Islamicate furnishings.[80] It is true that painting pictures of the beloved has a long history in Sanskrit literature, but at least one of Keśavdās's mentions of portraiture with its stress on representational accuracy is highly suggestive of Mughal practices.[81] The pearl-studded throne of his patron has a distinctly Mughal cast, and one strongly suspects that some of the rooms mentioned in the description of the palace, like the storehouse for dried fruits and nuts (Persian *mevā*) or the perfumery have some relationship to imperial styles.[82] It would be unwise to stake too much on this point, to be sure—Sanskrit *kāvya* has any number of descriptions of palaces he could have been referencing—but a few of Keśavdās's topics have at least a passing resemblance to those discussed in the *Ā'īn-i akbarī*. The sumptuary and leisure practices of these courts were certainly in dialogue with one another, and there may be at least some kind of oblique connection between the two texts. Although Keśavdās's is usually far more cursory than Abū al-Faẓl's, his Persian counterpart, some themes they treat in common include a palace storehouse for cloth, the fruitery, the perfumery, the treasury, manuscript production, and painting.[83] Keśavdās's dedicating of an entire nineteenth canto to the subject of *caugāna-varṇanaṃ*, a description of Bir Singh playing polo, similarly takes on a special significance when we recall Abū al-Faẓl's remarks about polo from the *Ā'īn-i akbarī*. Since set pieces on elements of royal *vinoda* (enjoyment) like hunting or

79. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.7.

80. Chess is mentioned in *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 20.19. While much of the imagery is fairly traditional, a few expressions such as *dulīcā* (carpet, probably from Persian *gālīcā*, according to McGregor 1993, 505), *palaṅga-posa* (bedcover, with the Persian suffix *posh*), *gulābana* (of roses, from *gulāb*), and *makhamala* (velvet, from *makhmal*) lend freshness to the passage. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 21.6–10.

81. *Jāke je guna rūpa bicitra, tahaṃ tahaṃ tāke citrai citra* (portraits were taken that captured a person's varied characteristics and form). *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.11 Also note the reference to "the floor's exquisitely beautiful carpet as though painted by a painter" (*bhūmi dulīcā sobhā sanyau, manau citere citrita banyau*), *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.11. Other references to painting occur in 20.19 and 20.30.

82. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 21.13. It should be noted that plenty of the expressions have nothing to do with Mughal culture, such as the *mānaśālā* (room where a woman goes to sulk, v. 21.14), reminiscent of the classical idea of a *kopabhavana*.

83. Compare *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 21.12–14, 27.5 with (respectively) Book One, *Ā'īn*s 31, 28, 30, 3–5, 34. Keśavdās's references to painting are recorded in note 81. I have discussed the possibility of such a textual dialogue between Abū al-Faẓl and Amṛt Rāi, the author of the earlier *Māncarit*, in Busch 2012, 319–25.

a palace festival had always been a part of *kāvya*, it was not much of a stretch for the poet to add a segment on polo. Still, even in his description of a polo match he does manage to impart an Indic twist: in a reprise of the *digvijay* a (conquest of the quarters) theme from classical poetry, Keśavdās imagines that Bir Singh's polo balls incite terror in the lands of distant kings.[84]

A *hayaśālāvarṇana* (description of the horse stables) is another good example of a literary set piece that draws simultaneously on the poet's own imagination, elements of Mughal culture, and the Sanskrit courtly-literary past. While Abū al-Faẓl, too, had discussed horses in his *Ā'īn-i akbarī*, the textual dispositions of these two court intellectuals couldn't be more dissimilar. Abū al-Faẓl limited himself to a dry catalog of horse breeds and the sums allotted for the monthly maintenance of war animals, the overall point of his work being to establish Emperor Akbar as a just ruler with a sophisticated bureaucracy.[85] Keśavdās, for his part, wants to convince us of Bir Singh's regal majesty by using a grandiloquent, not a workaday register. His *kāvya* invites us to marvel in astonishment at the Bundela king's horse collection and to experience the stables in a more sensory manner. He also evidently saw a chance to dazzle his readers with a 15-verse onomatopoeic poem structured by the order of the Devanagari syllabary (*kakaharā*). The alliterative effects are best signaled with a few lines from the poem itself:

kulhā kumaita kai yaha ghanai, kuhī kusala kilakī kūdanai
kuraga karariyā kāre barna, kacchī pacchī ke mana harna
khurani khilaiṃ bhūtala khecarī, kharakati kharaka khalani koṃ kharī
khandhārī khalakahi sukha deta, upaje khurāsāna ke kheta

[Bir Singh's stables are] filled with Kulha and Kumait (bay) horses.
The Kuhis excel at whinnying and jumping,
Kuragas and Karariyas are black in color,
Kachhis astonish the birds—their hooves fly over the earth until suddenly they are aloft.
Intense terror afflicts the enemies [who behold these horses]
The horses from Kandahar, reared in the land of Khurasan,
give pleasure to the world (*khalaka*, from Perso-Arabic *khalq*).

84. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 19.19. In an unusual poetic conceit, the court bard requests that the polo balls wielded by the king be granted *abhaydān* (quarter) after being hurled astonishing distances. As noted by the text's editor Kishorilal in his modern Hindi commentary on the verse, this is a genteel way for the poet to suggest that the game be brought to a close.

85. Abū al-Faẓl discusses horses in Book One, *Ā'īns* 58, 79; Book Two, *Ā'īn* 2.

The poet continues with the letters *ga, gha, ca, cha*, and so forth, proceeding in alphabetic order through (most of [86]) the Devanagari script, concluding with the line *hīrā hiranāgara hīsane, haraṣita hauṃsa harasulai bane* (the Hiras and Hiranagaras are prone to neighing, the Harsulas are attractive with their animated temperaments).[87] The sound effects are a stroke of performative genius, propelling the listener right into the scene. We can just hear the trampling of the earth under the horses' feet as the long poetic catalogue of horses is intoned by the poet. But the text with its dramatic flourishes of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian words and Central Asian place names also conjures up a real, contemporary world of Mughal power and a key military commodity of the age. *Turaki taruna tīra sī cāli* (the young Turkish horses are swift as arrows) runs a line from the *ta*'s.[88] When we get to the *ba*'s we encounter the phrases *balake bādāmī balivanta, bīra balocī bane ananta, badakasāna upaje bahu besa, dai paṭhae bālukā naresa.* (Balkh horses are almond-colored and strong, brave horses from Baluchistan are very beautiful. The horses of Badakhsan come in many forms, the King of Balkh has sent them).[89] While the *hayaśālāvarṇanam* is most immediately a chance to accompany the poet on a fascinating poetic journey, the exotic horses also invoke the Mughal imperial culture in which his patron participated. [90]

The description of the stables also proved a chance to showcase his knowledge of a Sanskrit *śāstra*. The last segment of Canto 17 digresses into the world of *śālihotra* (disquisition on horses), where we learn the little known fact that "in ancient times horses used to have wings, and fly at will"[91] before the poet treats us to a truncated lesson in equestrian science. Horses, like so many objects of *śastrik* scrutiny, are *uttama, madhyama, and adhama* (best, middling, and inferior); they can also be divided into a fourfold classification that corresponds to the *varṇa* (caste) system governing human social behavior. We even learn a little bit about veterinary diagnostics when the poet alerts us to the signs of illness,

86. It is not possible to begin a word with some letters, such as velar and palatal nasals.

87. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.26–40.

88. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.33.

89. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.36–37.

90. If here I have stressed the exoticizing dimensions of the horse sequnce in Canto 17 (the lines are not altogether different in effect from Narottam's verses on the armies in Kabul in their invoking of distant, unfamiliar worlds), some more local literary precedents can be cited. See for instance the two descriptions of horses in *Padmāvat* (Story of Padmini, c. 1540), vv. 46, 496. I thank Thomas de Bruijn for the reference. The Jāyasī parallel has also been noted by Kishorilal in *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, p. 353. An even more proximate parallel is the elaborate diṅgalesque description of the horses in Amṛt Rāi's *Māncarit*, which forms part of the *nagara-varṇana*, vv. 120–28 (published in *Māncaritāvalī*, ed. Bahura).

91. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.43.

including his humorously *grāmya* (lowbrow) warning about sickly horses that *mūtai bāra bāra aru hagai* (piss and shit all the time).[92] While the poet's decision to include a canto on horses in his lengthy *nagara-varṇana* of Orchha may well originate in an impulse to record a real life stable on the palace grounds,[93] the passage is also breathtaking in its literary gymnastics, politically suggestive with its hints of Mughal imperial geography, and at the same time oddly encyclopedic with its embedding of elements from a local Indian knowledge system.

Similar in its almost surreal didacticism but otherwise a far cry from micturating and defecating equines is another excursus in the final six cantos (28–33): into the realm of classical Indian political thought (*nīti*). The problem of power is as old as Indian literature itself, central to both the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*—and many texts since. It is no less central centuries later in the realm of Brajbhasha *kāvya* (and Bundela politics). Dāna (Charity), one of the characters from the allegorical frame story who had been relegated to the background for most of the narrative, now takes on a pivotal role as mentor to the king. When Bir Singh expresses his disillusionment with recent Orchha political history, Dāna counsels him on the vagaries of *rājyaśrī*, royal power:

rājaśrī ati cañcala, tāta, tāhū kī saba sunijai bāta
dhana sampati aru jobana garva, āni milai aviveka akharva
rājasirī sauṃ hota prasaṅga, kauna na bhraṣṭa hoya yahi saṅga

(Śloka)
yauvanaṃ dhanasampattiḥ prabhutvam avivekitā[94]
ekaikam apy anarthāya, kimu yatra catuṣṭayam

śāstra sujala dhovatahū jāta, malina hota saba tāke gāta

Royal power is fickle, my friend, now listen to an account of it, as well:
When wealth, property, youth, and pride are compounded by total ignoronce,
consorting with royal power is courting corruption.

(Sanskrit couplet)
Youth, wealth and property, power and ignorance. Just one would be to invite disaster, to say nothing of all four.

92. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 17.73

93. Stables are still extant today at the rear of the Orchha palace. Bundelkhand was also an enormous base of military recruitment for the Mughals, although generally more focused on infantry than cavalry. See Kolff 2002.

94. Here I prefer the reading *avivekitā* in the Mishra edition to that of Kishorilal (*avivekitaḥ*).

Even when cleansed by the pure water of the *śāstra*s,
a body tainted by royal power remains soiled.[95]

Here and throughout the "*nīti* cantos," Keśavdās routinely peppers his text with Sanskrit aphorisms, adding another complex inter-textual layer. Keśavdās has literally taken a page out of Bāṇa's book, drawing on the *śukanāsopadeśa* section of *Kādambarī*.[96] The interleaving of Sanskrit phrases with Brajbhasha paraphrases doubly reinforces the message but also contributes a sense of authority and stateliness to the vernacular text and, by extension, to King Bir Singh Deo himself. I am not aware of another Brajbhasha *kāvya* that deals so centrally with the themes of royalty and governance, even to the extent of incorporating a long discourse on the subject right into the narrative. In a series of passages that meld the stark political exigencies expounded in *arthaśāstra* discourse with the aphoristic blandness of *subhāṣita* (gnomic) literature, Dāna delivers an elaborate sermon on *rājadharma* (kingly conduct), explaining practices such as *dāna* (charity and public works), the supervising of one's ministers, messengers, and other court personnel, building strategic alliances, expected codes of military conduct, the proper administration of justice (*daṇḍa*), and numerous other related topics. Despite the didactic nature of the final section, Keśavdās does not abandon the *kāvya* techniques that had served him so well elsewhere in the work. In one of the most complex *śleṣa* verses in all of Braj literature Keśavdās equates Bir Singh with the *trimūrti*. The device of *śleṣa* is more powerful than a mere simile because it produces a deep equivalence between objects at the level of language itself. Here one reading (*pakṣa*) describes the king, and three parallel readings construct the images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[97]

In the final sermon of this *kāvya*, Dāna, resorting again to a tripartite categorization, explains to Bir Singh that kings are base, middling, and supreme. Base kings are those who accede to power without regard for the proper rites (Keśavdās tactfully fails to mention this, but Bir Singh is, in fact, a king who came to power through irregular channels). Middling and supreme are those

95. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 29.17–20.

96. Note, for instance, how closely Keśavdās's phrasing in the last line ressembles Bāṇa's: *yauvanārambhe ca prāyaḥ śāstrajalaprakṣālananirmalāpi kāluṣyam upayāti buddhiḥ, Kādambarī*, p. 216. This and other borrowings from Bāṇa are noted in Bhatnagar 1991, 257–62.

97. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 32.14. To illustrate the technique: the line *rājai dvijarāja pada bhūṣaṇa vimala* may be construed in four separate ways: "for whom the swan is a beautiful foot ornament," that is, whose vehicle (*vāhana*) is the swan (*Brahmāpakṣa*); "who bears the mark of Bhṛgu's kick" (*Viṣṇupakṣa*); "whose head is adorned with the crescent moon" (*Śivapakṣa*); "who is a beautiful ornament to the feet of Brahmins," that is, who bows at the feet of Brahmins (*Bir Singh pakṣa*). Conflating a king with divinity is a typical use of *śleṣa*. See Bronner 2010, 6, 85.

kings crowned by Brahmins and divine beings respectively. When Dāna grants his pupil Bir Singh a boon, the Bundela leader asks to be installed as a supreme (*uttama*) king. One by one various deities, including the personifications of Dharma (moral rectitude), Jaya (victory), Utsāha (martial valor), Ānanda (joy), Bhāgya (good fortune), and many other royal prerogatives, arrive for the coronation of Bir Singh and his wife Parbati. In an extended *darbār* scene they present poems in his honor and adorn him with a *tilaka*, investing him with the title of king but also with a portion of themselves.[98] A parrot observing the court ceremony recounts to a mynah bird:

> He was a younger son of Madhukar Shah,
> But now he has become the eldest...
> Lord Dharma and his attendants have arrived
> To award him everything. King Bir Singh embodies a portion (*kalā*) of Lord Viṣṇu.[99]

A dizzying array of gods, birds, and of course people are present at Bir Singh's coronation, but Dharma gets the last word. He enjoins Bir Singh to rule justly and then blesses him. The work comes to a close with Dharma's bestowal of three boons: human suffering is to be alleviated by hearing Bir Singh's story (*Bīracarita*); Dharma will reside in the Bundela king's heart; and Jahangir will be granted a long life.

Whether we focus on the more factual historical cantos early in the work, the ultra-literary passages with their rich imagery and multiple layers of intertextuality, or the intensely sermonizing, quasi-Sanskrit *nīti* segments that most overtly deal with injunctions about royal comportment, the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* constantly reveals itself as a substantial literary and political argument in support of Bir Singh's rise to power. In all likelihood commissioned for the coronation, the work was also, perhaps, a consummate act of public relations. More than any of these elements, the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* was also a vehicle for expressing a degree of local sovereignty as Mughal overlordship became naturalized in Bundelkhand. The Mughals sit at the margins of this *kāvya* (although we are never allowed entirely to forget them—Bir Singh may demand boons for his own sake but he also asks Dharma to grant the emperor a long life). It is the Bundela Rajput who occupies centerstage. While Bir Singh is accorded some attention in Persian texts like the *Jahāngīrnāmah*, from a Mughal perspective he was but one of many *manṣabdār*s who kept the empire running through military service, displays of loyalty at court, and outlays of capital on public

98. *Apane-apane aṃsa dai, kiye tilaka abhiṣeka*, *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 33.12.
99. *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 32.43.

works and architecture. He was just a bit player in the dominant Persian discourse of the day. In Keśavdās's Brajbhasha *kāvya*, however, he is the star of the show.

D. Being Sub-imperial: Multilayered Cultural Identity in the *Lalitlalām* of Matirām Tripāṭhī

While still inchoate in the early seventeenth century as Keśavdās's career was drawing to a close, *rīti* literature signaled a new way of asserting Rajput courtly values in a vernacular, if still paradoxically classical, idiom. This style of Braj classicism would be widely adopted by the courts of Rajput *manṣabdār*s in the course of the seventeenth century. In this last section I examine the case of Bundi, where Matirām Tripāṭhī was commissioned to write his *Lalitlalām* (Finest lover), a spectacular instance of the *muktaka* style of *rīti* poetry. Although earlier Bundi rulers had commissioned a Sanskrit *mahākāvya*, the *Surjanacarita* (Biography of Surjan Rao, c. 1590?) of Chandrashekhara,[100] the *Lalitlalām* is significant for being the first known Brajbhasha work to be produced at the Bundi court, evidence of both a shifting cultural preference for vernacular *kāvya* as well as the wider transmission of *rīti* literary culture across western India in this period.[101]

Matirām Tripāṭhī is rightly considered one of the finest poets of the full-fledged *rīti* style. Unfortunately, while he bequeathed to posterity a significant literary inheritance, he left almost nothing with which to reconstruct his biography. It is hard to assemble more than a few scant sentences about him. He hailed from a family of littérateurs based in Tivikamapur (near modern Kanpur), which happens to be the hometown of Akbar's famous minister Birbal. Along with his brothers Cintāmaṇi and Bhūṣaṇ, who were also famous *rīti* poets, Matirām is emblematic of a whole class of circulating Brahmin court professionals who entered the service of the regional kings of early modern India and even, on occasion, performed their Braj poetry for Mughal emperors.[102] Like Keśavdās, Matirām was both a *kavi* and an *ālaṅkārika*. He wrote exclusively in

100. Candraśekhara completed the *Surjanacarita* in Banaras, possibly during the reign of the Bundi king Bhoj Hada. For a recent analysis, see Talbot, 2012.

101. More research is needed on the literary history of Bundi. Perhaps there are works that have not yet come to light. The *Pṛthvīrājrāso*, whose author Cand Bardāī was invoked by Narottam Kavi in a passage cited above, was evidently known to the Bundi court from at least the days of Raja Bhoj since Candraśekhara devotes an entire canto to the life of Prithviraj Chauhan. (Cynthia Talbot, personal communication; McGregor 1984, 18, 123).

102. Cf. O'Hanlon 2007, 370. Recall that Narottam Kavi migrated from Rampura to Amber in order to write *praśasti kāvya* for Man Singh. A few details about Matirām's brothers Bhūṣaṇ

the *muktaka* style, never attempting a lengthy *mahākāvya* in *prabandha* format. His *Satsaī*, which rivals in excellence the more famous *rīti* work of the same name by Biharilal (court poet to Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, Man Singh's descendant), is a beautiful anthology of 700 couplets that must have riveted the audiences of his day. His *Rasrāj* (Supreme *rasa*) and *Lalitlalām* are both treatises on aesthetics written in the *rītigranth* (textbook) format and for the *Lalitlalām* a clear provenance can be established: it was commissioned by Raja Bhao Singh Hada of Bundi (r. 1658–82).[103] Although undated, the terminus post quem of the work is 1658 since Matirām mentions the war of succession that broke out between Aurangzeb and his three brothers—a war in which Bundi's own royal succession was expedited since Bhao Singh's father Satrusal (r. 1632–58) lost his life fighting on Dara Shikoh's side.

Matirām is nearly as reticent about his reasons for writing *Lalitlalām* as he is about sharing autobiographical details. A single verse reveals his motivations:

> The fine poet (*sukabi*[104]) Matirām wrote this poetry-filled work *Lalitlalām*, a storehouse of ornaments (*bhūṣaṇa-dhāma*), for the pleasure of Bhao Singh.[105]

Despite its brevity—the work hardly totals 400 verses—the *Lalitlalām* delivers a strong impact on several levels. Quite apart from the emphasis on pleasure referenced by the author himself, the work additionally contains some fine examples of *bhakti* poetry as well as many verses that allude to contemporary politics. It also had an educational mission: by virtue of its structure, the *Lalitlalām* purports to be a treatise on *alaṅkāraśāstra*, a manual on the correct use of rhetorical tropes. Perhaps the Bundi king asked his court pandit Matirām for some lessons in the fine points of literature, for being a dignified Rajput king in Mughal India required not only displays of military might, but also of sophistication and connoisseurship. Commissioning Brajbhasha manuals on *kāvya* was one way to achieve this. These manuals also played a role in the education of the senses. Cultivating pleasure, or *bhoga*, was a longstanding kingly virtue in India.

and Cintāmaṇi are in Busch 2010, 100–8; Busch 2011, 188–96. In his *Jahāngīrjascandrikā*, Keśavdās performs his poetry for the Mughal emperor and he may have written the very work with that intention.

103. Matirām is also credited with several other minor works but scholars disagree about the attributions and patronage contexts, and there is inadequate historical information to adjudicate the matter. For a brief overview of his purported oeuvre see Sharma 1983, 5–6; McGregor 1984, 176–77.

104. Like Keśavdās, Matirām does not seem to suffer from a crisis of confidence. Elsewhere he refers to himself with similar expressions. See *Lalitlalām*, vv. 159, 184, 219, 224.

105. *Lalitlalām*, v. 38.

Matirām's slightly cryptic title *Lalitlalām*, here translated as "finest lover," may have been a reference to the concept of a *lalita nāyaka* (romantic hero) from Indian poetic theory, a flattering gesture toward the patron (for whom he actually uses the epithet *lalitlalām* in one verse) because it suggests that he is sophisticated, attractive to women, and knowledgeable in the ways of love.[106]

In keeping with his ostensible educational mission, the poet devised an elaborate sequence of *lakṣaṇa* (definition verses) to explain to his patron the basics of Indian tropology. Most of the *alaṅkāra*s under discussion originate in Sanskrit literary theory, but the poet does present a few *bheda*s (categories) of his own and otherwise updates the classical imagery with many interesting vernacular twists, particularly in the *udāharaṇa* (example verses) that accompany the definitions. A section of the work on *vakrokti* (oblique expression) begins as follows:

Vakrokti-lakṣaṇa
śleṣa, kāku soṃ artha kī, racanā aura ju hoya
bakra ukti soṃ jānie, gyāna salila mati dhoya

Śleṣa-udāharaṇa
mere mana tuma ***basata*** *hau, maiṃ na kiyau aparādha*
tumhaiṃ doṣa ko deta, hari, hai yaha ***kāma*** *asādha*

Definition of vakrokti
There is another type of composition that centers on multiple meanings or irony. Those who have purified their intelligence in the ocean of wisdom term this "oblique expression."

First example: multiple meanings (one possible reading)
You dwell in my heart, I have done nothing wrong.
Who is blaming you, Hari? This is a hopeless matter.

First example: multiple meanings (an alternate reading)
You have overpowered my heart, I have done nothing wrong.
Who is blaming you, Hari? This love/desire is unattainable.[107]

The technique of *śleṣa* originates in Sanskrit poetics, but this instance of word play stems from special conditions of vernacular speech. The word *basata*

106. *Lalitlalām*, v. 250. Sharma 1983, 7, suggests other possible ways of understanding the compound, settling on *cāru-camatkār* (beautiful wonderment). Another proposal is that *lalām* here means *alaṅkāra*. A loose translation would then be "a manual on tropes suitable for those of refined sensibility." See Omprakash 1973, 339–40.

107. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 369–70.

is derived from the Braj root *bas-*, which means both to dwell (Sanskrit *vas*) and to overpower (Sanskrit *vaś*). The word *kāma*, for its part, can actually be derived three ways: as the *tadbhava* "action/matter" (Sanskrit *karma*), the *tatsama*, "love," (Sanskrit *kāma*) and also from the Persian word *kām*, "desire."[108] Vernacular language, which must be denigrated as *apabhraṣṭa* (corrupted) if viewed by the ancient ideology of Sanskrit purity, is a wonderful semantic tool for the early modern *rīti* poet in search of new *śleṣa* possibilities, a challenging poetic domain whose interpretation did indeed require, to cite Matirām, that both author and audience possess—an "intelligence purified in the ocean of wisdom".

Some of Matirām's example verses, far from merely elaborating on a theme from classical poetics, do an entirely different kind of work, doubling as highly political poems that feature his patron King Bhao Singh Hada or another member of the Bundi royal line. Like Keśavdās, Matirām is entirely silent about his sources, but he may have known the *Pratāparudrīya* of Vidyānātha and the *Ekāvalī* of Vidyādhara (both from the fourteenth-century Deccan), Sanskrit treatises on rhetoric in which political poetry is similarly embedded.[109] A slightly pedestrian illustration of the *ananvaya alaṅkāra*, a trope in which the *upameya* (object being compared) is the same as the *upamāna* (standard of comparison), doubles as a *vaṃśāvalī* of the Bundi kings:

> The majesty of Surjan can be found in Surjan alone.
> Bhoj is like Bhoj in the determination (also pride) that fate accorded him.
> Says Matirām, Ratnesh resembles Ratnesh in accomplishments of the sword.
> Gopinath was a second Gopinath in filial duty.
> Satrusal can be compared to Satrusal when it comes to martial valor.
> I have seen the world but never did I see the luster of Bhao Singh, the Bhao Singh of kings.[110]

This verse illustrating the concept of an *upamā* does a lot more than reinforce a point about literary theory:

> Divan (minister) Bhao Singh is the one Rajput whose spirit grows fourfold upon engaging in battle.

108. The similarities do have an etymological basis: Steingass derives Persian *kām* from Sanskrit *kāma*. Steingass 2007, 1009.

109. Matirām's brother Cintāmaṇi Tripāṭhī cites the latter in his *Kavikulkalplatā*, another work of *alaṅkāraśāstra* in the characteristic *rīti* style. For a discussion of other possible sources, including Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*, Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, Jayadeva's *Candrāloka*, and Appayyadīkṣita's *Kuvalāyānanda*, see Sharma 1983, 6.

110. *Lalitlalām*, v. 54.

Matirām says, this is why the fame of Satrusal's son
spreads in the circles of kings.
The blazing heat of the Delhi sun has dried up the luster[111]
of Indian kings like water in a pond.
Under such conditions, all kingly pride (*rāva maiṃ sarama*)
has dissolved like salt in the ocean.[112]

While the Sanskrit literary heritage upon which so much of *rīti kāvya* is based had many ways of giving voice to *vīra rasa*, these poems and many others like them speak not so much of kingly classicism but of the here and now, indexing the extent to which political concerns were a core component of *rīti* aesthetics.[113]

As with other sub-imperial texts like the *Māncarit* and the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, the *Lalitlalām* contains important clues about the self-conceptions of local Rajput courts that were subject to Mughal rule. Some of Matirām's verses stress Bundi grandeur—one could even say Bundi independence. The extraliterary mission of an elaborate *būndī-varṇana* (description of Bundi), for instance, is to proclaim the beauty and sophistication of the capital city and, by extension, the exemplary nature of Bundi rule. In the words of Matirām:

jagat-bidita būndīnagara, sukha sampati ko dhāma
kaliyuga hūṃ maiṃ satyayuga, tahāṃ karata bisrāma
paṛhata sunata mana dai nigama, āgama, samṛti purāṇa (smṛti, purāṇa)
gīta-kabitta kalāni ko, tahaṃ saba loga sujāna...
tā nagarī ko prabhu, baṛo hāṛā surajana rāva.
racyo eka saba gunina ko bara biraṃci samudāva

The city of Bundi is well known to the world for its wealth and
happiness.
The golden age reposes here, even in the iron age.
The *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and authoritative traditions are recited, and all
listen attentively.
All are connoisseurs of singing, poetry, and the arts...
Rao Surjan the great is the founder of the city.
Lord Brahmā established there the finest talents (*gunina*).

111. The Braj word *pānipa* means both water and luster.

112. *Lalitlalām, v.* 41. Keśavdās used similar imagery in the opening to his philosophical work *Vijnāngītā*, 1.17.

113. While, to be sure, not all *rīti* works are as political as this one, there are plenty of similar examples, including the *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ* (Ornament to Shivaji, 1673) of Matirām's brother Bhūṣaṇ, written for the famous Maratha king's coronation.

The 15-verse passage, too lengthy to quote in full here, further elaborates everything that makes Bundi an idyllic place: its architecture, painting, music, markets with purveyors of finely embroidered cloth, heart-ravishingly beautiful women, gardens, ponds, and even warbling song birds.[114] With the exception of a single reference to luxury textiles (*jarakasa*, Persian *zarkash*, v. 13), Matirām's descriptions are very much composed in the stylized *kāvya* mode of a *nagara-varṇana*, lacking the more Mughalized specificity that we find in some parts of the *Māncarit* and the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*. There are no polo grounds in Matirām's Bundi capital; he prefers a more traditionally Indic representation of the city from classical *kāvya*.

Bundi had been a tributary state to the Mughals for nearly a century—since Rao Surjan Hada surrendered the Ranthambore Fort to Akbar in 1569—but a central point for this text is that there was no insurmountable blow to its stature. Matirām's poetic treatment of him and his son Bhoj, the first two Bundi kings who had to contend with Mughal power, emphasizes their independence. Rao Surjan, "ornament to the Chauhan dynasty," is portrayed as a noble warrior and a model king of old, both *dhārmik* and *dānī* (law-abiding and munificent). Through a telling act of omission Matirām lets him off the hook for ceding Ranthambore to the Mughals: the incident—one much stressed in contemporary Persian sources—is completely elided from his Braj account.[115] In the case of Rao Surjan's son Bhoj (r. 1585–1607/8), Matirām does not discuss the king's role as a military leader under Akbar, which is the main impression a Mughal text like the *Akbarnāmah* affords. Instead we are told that this Bundi ruler "protected the pride of the Hindus," (*hinduna kī rākhī sarama*), "rendering lame the foot of the emperor's authority" (*sāhi ko hukuma-paga paṅga bhau*).[116]

In other cases—particularly for more recent generations who were deeply accustomed to the empire—Matirām emphasizes the more positive aspects of Mughal military service. Ratan Singh Hada (r. 1608–32) is said to have "prospered in the joys of imperial battles," a remark expressed in fittingly Persianized Braj as *sāhani sauṃ rana-raṅga maiṃ jītyo bakhta-bilanda*.[117] Even the death

114. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 6–22.

115. As insightfully noted by Cynthia Talbot 2012, the Sanskrit court poet Candraśekhara from an earlier generation was extremely selective in reporting how Bundi lost its independence to the Mughals. In his *Surjanacarita* Candraśekhara, downplays the siege of Ranthambore fort and Mughal *manṣabs* (administrative assignments) are recast as the king's pious acts in Hindu pilgrimage centers.

116. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 25–26.

117. *Lalitlalām*, v. 27. Many passages in the *Jahāngīrnāmah* confirm that Ratan Singh was rewarded with generous *manṣabs* and titles, first "Sarbulandi Rai" and later "Ram Raj," his leadership on campaigns in the Decccan and as governor of Burhanpur being particularly commended by the emperor. See pp. 177, 181, 304, 317, 394, 396, 407, 422, 427, 430, 433, 449.

of Satrusal Hada (r. 1632–58), the father of Matirām's patron, in the Mughal war of succession is given a strangely rosy spin when Matirām commemorates him as the "incarnation of Kshatriya dharma" (*chatra-dharma-avatāra*) and extols his having "held his ground on the battlefield, knowing it to be a Kshatriya Kashi—a city of liberation from transmigration for warriors (*jisa jāni kai chatrina kauṃ rana-kāsī*)."[118] While the poet's verses about the earliest Hada kings tend either to ignore the Mughal relationship or to contest it, by Matirām's account more recent generations were not only resigned to these political realities but even welcomed them. Bhao Singh, for instance, is presented as the "protector of imperial honour" (*pati pātasāha kī*) and the [upholder of the] reputation (*ijati*, from Persian 'izzat) of the Umraos, the Mughal nobility.[119] If you can't beat them, you might as well join them.

A close study of the language and imagery of this *kāvya* reveals the complexity of the Bundi court's cultural and political identity. The text weaves in and out of contemporary and classical registers, with the latter serving to stress how the Bundi kings were paradigmatic Hindu rulers. Bhao Singh, like virtually every king in *kāvya* and *praśasti* texts, is wise (*parama prabīna*); a paragon of dharma (*dharamadhurīna*); kind to those in need (*dīnabandhu*); and a fierce warrior who routs his enemies (*dujjana bihāla kari*). This last expression is gently Persianized (one meaning of *beḥāl* is flustered), but elsewhere the poet's frequent use of *tatsama* (pure Sanskrit) compounds for capturing royal stateliness is undoubtedly a deliberate invocation of ancient political registers. In some places the poet emphasizes the Hindu identity of his patron (recall the line cited earlier in which Bhao Singh's forefather Bhoj was celebrated for his protection of Hindu honor). Indeed, the first time we encounter Bhao Singh Hada in the text Matirām proclaims him to be the shield of all the Hindus (*saba hinduna kī ḍhāla*) and the protector of dharma and correct religious observance in an era of domination by Turks.[120] On other occasions the poet types his patron *hinduvāna pati* (lord of the Hindus) and, in a more Mughal political register, *divāna hinduvāna ko* ("minister" or, more loosely, "leader" of the Hindus).[121] If all of this is suggestive for its signaling of a protectionist stance toward Hindu groups, Bhao Singh is elsewhere intriguingly typed *divāna duhūṃ dīnani kauṃ* (leader of the two religious communities), clarifying that any celebration of Hinduness did

118. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 31; 33. Elsewhere in the work Satrusal is shown protecting Hindu temples and cows. See, for instance, v. 272. Satrusal's death is also given brief attention in a Mughal source: *Ma'āṣir al-umarā* Vol. 1, p. 405.

119. *Lalitlalām*, v. 131. And when his father died fighting for Dara Shikoh, the crucial point is that he died honourably (*raja rākhi*, v. 195). Cf. the expression *raja-lāja ko nidhāna* in v. 262.

120. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 34–35.

121. *Lalitlalām*, vv. 36, 79.

not at the same time entail enmity toward Islam.[122] Matirām powerfully encapsulates the multilayered self-conception of a *manṣabdār* like Bhao Singh in a telling string of epithets: *jānapati, dānapati, hāṛā hinduvānapati, dillīpati-dalapati, balābandhapati hai* ("the Hada king is discerning and munificent, he is lord of the Hindus, the emperor's general, and king over the Aravalli Mountains").[123] Again, note the mixture of traditional kingly values like connoisseurship and liberality with some newer requisites that reflect early modern political conditions. The juxtaposition of *hinduvānapati, dillīpati-dalapati*, and *balābandhapati*, quite apart from the terms' incantatory sonorousness, is a telling indicator that being a vaunted "Hindu" leader was not in the least incompatible with being a Mughal army commander. Also note the stress on a more local identity: *balābandhapati*, "King over Balabandh, that is, the Aravalli Mountain range in western India."[124] Elsewhere in the *Lalitlalām* one finds variations of this epithet, including *balābandha sulatāna/suratāna, balābandha pātasāha, balābandha ko dīvāna*, which reconfigure Persian political vocabulary by investing it with a new local salience.[125] Aurangzeb may rule Delhi, but Bhao Singh is Sultan of Bundi and the nearby Aravallis.

Staging power locally like this, from within the constraints of imperial service, emerges as one of the main thrusts of Matirām's work, and was, we may presume, a vital concern for his Bundi patron. The claim to being Sultan of the Aravalli mountains salvaged a degree of sovereignty for a clan of Rajput kings who spent the better part of their years fighting the Mughal wars (the Bundi kings were particularly active in the Deccan campaigns). In one of his final verses Matirām presents his patron's authority in terms of precisely this combination of local sovereignty and Mughal service:

kahai matirāma dilīpati kauṃ baṛhāī deta
satrusāla nanda balābandha sulatāna hai

Matirām says,
the son of Satrusal increases the stature of the king of Delhi.
He is emperor of Aravalli.[126]

122. *Lalitlalām*, v.140. Keśavdās had characterized Emperor Jahangir in a similar manner in *Jahāngīrjascandrikā*, vv. 31, 168.

123. *Lalitlalām*, v. 36.

124. *Balābandh* is a rare word meaning "Aravalli." See *Hindī śabdsāgar* Vol. 7, 3409.

125. This idea of the Bundi kings being supreme in their region occurs repeatedly in the work. See for instance *Lalitlalām*, vv. 36, 52, 58, 74, 103, 165, 398. Such hybridized Islamicate titles are reminiscent of *rāya-suratrāna* (Sultan among Hindu kings), an epithet of the Vijayanagara ruler Kṛṣṇadevarāya. See Wagoner 1996.

126. *Lalitlalām*, v. 398.

If in the grand scheme of Mughal statecraft Bhao Singh and the other rulers of Bundi were but small cogs in an enormous military machine, political authority looked rather different when viewed from a Rajput's own territory. It was on home turf in places precisely like Bundi, away from the urban strongholds of Mughal power and beyond the reach of Persian chroniclers—indeed, precisely in a Brajbhasha *kāvya*—where a Rajput *manṣabdār* and his poet could both give voice to concerns about contemporary political life and make claims about their own royal and cultural stature.[127]

E. Conclusion

The consolidation of Mughal power catapulted regional rulers like Man Singh Kachhwaha of Amber, Bir Singh Deo Bundela of Orchha, and the Hada rulers of Bundi into a new orbit of political relationships. In this transformed world, Rajput kings had to address multiple constituencies: they negotiated their prestige vis-à-vis the Mughals, who dictated many of the political terms; they jostled for power with rival Rajput houses;[128] they also displayed their royal worthiness to members of the local court and the *prajā* (subjects) of their home territory. These were complicated political maneuverings that required a complicated array of cultural idioms. Under Mughal rule Rajput kings were widely exposed to Persianate culture—whether attending the emperor's court or serving in imperial military campaigns. While some, like Raja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur and the Maratha King Shivaji, frequently wrote official letters in Persian, early Rajput kings did not sponsor Persian literature to a significant extent.[129] Persian did not become their primary cultural language, at least not the one they chose to cultivate when they were back in their capitals, away from the Mughal wars. The kingly virtues of Mughal *manṣabdār*s were best expressed in non-Persianate literary idioms. From around 1600 the generally Brahmin class of *rīti* poets—trained in Sanskrit and thus well positioned to draw upon the political epistemes

127. Studies of Rajput architectural patronage similarly reveal how the regional kings of Mughal India negotiated multiple identities in local and cosmopolitan settings. See Asher 1992; Asher and Talbot 2006, 148–51; Rothfarb 2012.

128. Recall how Keśavdās explicitly situates Bir Singh Deo Bundela in relation to contemporary Kachhwaha and Mewar kings in *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit*, 1.2, cited earlier. Matirām also alludes in several places to competition among *manṣabdār*s, as when Bhao Singh is said to inspire their envy (*manasabadārana ke mana lalakata haiṃ*, *Lalitlalām*, v. 122).

129. One does encounter exceptions to this rule, and certainly there is evidence for Rajput engagement with Persian literature, as when Jahangir mentions that Rai Manohar Kachhwaha was able to compose Persian poetry. *Jahāngīrnāmah*, p. 30.

of Sanskrit literature—began to forge a new tradition of kingly *kāvya* that spoke to the needs of the present in a suitably classical albeit updated idiom. Some, like Narottam, made it clear that this was what they were doing. Keśavdās and Matirām, for their part, left to posterity the interpretation of their actions but in either case there isn't much room for doubt that they actively invented a new classical idiom of Hindi.

Even if the basic poetic structures of Braj and Sanskrit *kāvya* are similar, distinct new expressive opportunities were afforded by the vernacular medium, very few of which have been theorized in a satisfactory manner. In premodern times Sanskrit was revered as the *suravāṇī*, language of the gods, perfect in form and set in grammatical structure, whereas Braj was a lowly *naravāṇī*, a language of men, imperfect and changeable. Some of the literary power of Brajbhasha courtly poetry often ironically stems from its very "corruptness"—a feature that "perfect" Sanskrit with its linguistic fixity was by definition not supposed to exhibit.[130] Persian and Arabic words were used creatively to deepen the semantic textures of Brajbhasha *kāvya*, which enabled the development of a new, more hybrid literary register. The interface with the Indo-Muslim political sphere is yet another place where *rīti* poetry departed dramatically from earlier heritage. The practice of *kāvya* in this period necessitated that poets accommodate polo, Islamicate textiles, Persian political vocabulary, and various other signs of the Mughal state with which Rajput courts had been embroiled since the sixteenth century. Political relationships had cultural effects. This linguistic and cultural hybridity constituted one of the most dramatic breaks from Sanskrit in the system of *rīti* poetics, which otherwise had so much in common with classical traditions—to the extent that perhaps fully half of Braj court *kāvya* consists of textbooks on *alaṅkāraśāstra*.

We have explored here the deep ties between the *rīti* style of *kāvya* and the self-presentation of three specific Rajput courts. But the approach is generalizable. There are dozens if not hundreds of instances of similar texts from comparable local courts in the early modern period, which in addition to their noteworthy literary features reveal how culture and power operated outside of Persianate Delhi, Agra, or Lahore. That the Kachhwahas of Amber and other leading Rajput *manṣabdār*s contributed in decisive ways to the consolidation of the Mughal state from Akbar's day is an inarguable fact of early modern Indian history. Less known is a related issue from literary history: the needs of *manṣabdārī* court culture were a substantial factor in the rise of new vernacular forms of *kāvya* during the Mughal period.

The textual ramifications of these new zones of political contact are barely understood, as are the relationships between *rīti* and contemporary Persian texts.

130. Sanskrit could, however, take on shades of its locale, as when writers in Tamil lands inflected their *kāvya* in distinctly regional ways. See Bronner and Shulman 2006.

It can be no accident that the earliest instances of *rīti* literature stem from either the Mughal court or the *manṣabdārī* Rajput courts that were in close dialogue with the Mughals.[131] We have seen in the case of Amber, Orchha, and Bundi that these new textual forms are partly a dialogue with Mughal power and it is certainly arresting to consider that the *Māncarit* of Narottam was written at virtually the same time as Abū al-Faẓl's far more famous *Akbarnāmah* (composed between 1589–95). New political configurations demanded new types of textuality. The Bundi rulers were patronizing Sanskrit *kāvya* in the 1590s and sponsored a *Surjanacaritra*, only later turning to Brajbhasha. Within a decade—at just about the time Jahangir began writing his memoirs, in fact—the newly coronated Bundela king commissioned a biography from Keśavdās. This brings us to a last point about these texts. Like the Persian memoirs and *tārīkh* (chronicle) traditions, Brajbhasha *kāvya* was history—"history in the vernacular"—produced in accordance with an epistemology that, while hardly historicist in a Rankean sense, constituted a significant narrativization of the past for its local readership.[132] Narottam Kavi wrote with tremendous poetic flair of Man Singh's victories at Haldighati and in the far-off lands of Kabul and Bihar. In recounting the more local struggles between Ram Shah and Bir Singh Deo Bundela, Keśavdās used a variety of tactics that range from straightforward reporting to referencing the *Rāmāyaṇa* (considered both *kāvya* and *itihāsa* by the Indian tradition), apparently in order to lace his work with intertextual irony. With its interweaving of *śāstrik* threads into a narrative that also displays considerable verisimilitude, Keśavdās's is a challenging but rewarding type of history to parse. Although couched in a very different genre—a textbook on classical poetic theory—the *Lalitlalām* too contains many references to Mughal politics (the infamous succession struggle waged between Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh is a case in point) and is also a window onto the complexities of *manṣabdārī* service under several generations of Mughal rulers. *Rīti* literature in Brajbhasha, with its special combination of classical and contemporary idioms, is testimony to the enduring relevance of *kāvya* in the Indian tradition.

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131. The critical role of Mughal patrons in the development of classical Hindi courtly styles is discussed in Busch 2011, chapter 4.

132. Cf. Rao et al. 2003. The phrase "history in the vernacular" is that of Aquil and Chatterjee 2008.

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23

Poetry and Play in Kavikarṇapūra's Play Within the Play*

Gary Tubb

The *Caitanyacandrodaya*, a play depicting the life of the charismatic saint Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, was completed in 1572 and was reportedly first performed in July of that year during the *rathayātrā* festival of the Jagannātha temple in Puri, having been commissioned for that purpose by the Gajapati king of Orissa, Pratāparudra. Near the end of the play, the king himself, standing in the same temple, obligingly encapsulates many of the themes we have been discussing:

King—(listening) What is this song?

Kāśīmiśra—It's about the sweetness of the sound of the Lord's flute. Your Majesty doesn't understand it because it's in Bengali.

King—This is amazing, that he,
The fair one reflecting himself
as Kṛṣṇa himself
in the minds of the pious,
is dancing right here,
manifesting Vṛṇdāvana's *rasa*
here on Nīlādri—

* Portions of this essay were presented in a paper entitled "*Yamaka* in the *Caitanyacandrodaya*" at the 217th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society in San Antonio, March, 2007.

the ineffable Primal Person,
tasting the first pangs of longing
in a young woman's passion for Kṛṣṇa—amazing!
It's just amazing, so beautiful,
how Caitanya plays.[1]

I notice first the presence here not just of local references—geographical, linguistic, and personal—but of localities in interaction: a Bengali ascetic (formerly the Brahmin headmaster of a Sanskrit school in the bubbling intellectual town of Navadvīpa) dancing to a Bengali tune (the meaning of which is explained in Sanskrit) in front of an Orissan king (whose political fortunes in real life will be altered by his entanglement with this ascetic) in the presence of the most famous local deity in the most powerful temple in Puri, where the even more famous events that took place in Vṛndāvan are now being miraculously remanifested.

Second, I notice other contrasts springing from the multiple levels of Vaiṣṇava theology in its Gauḍīya form: the first male (*ādyaḥ puruṣaḥ*), elsewhere reputed to be aloof and unmoving, here not only dancing but actually feeling the freshest longings of a young female, in the person of Kṛṣṇa himself, present in a body that is not dark but (as the first word of the verse tells us) very fair, in representation of the fact that the person dancing is not only Kṛṣṇa, but also Rādhā—or, more precisely, Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā in union, which is why every urge of hers can be savored directly by him.

Above all, I am compelled to notice, since the king cannot help restating it, something that is repeatedly remarked on by observers both internal and external to the Caitanya movement as its most striking feature: the amazing ability of Caitanya himself, amply documented in the historical sources, to captivate persons of importance and apparent sobriety, not by the force of the texts he composed—he hardly composed any—but by the sheer ravishing power of his personal presence and of his physical beauty and grace.

This compelling gracefulness is a part of what is referred to in our play scores of times by the word *līlā*, a term of great importance not only in theology

1. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 10.24:
***rāja**—(ākarṇya) kim etad gītam.*
***kāśīmiśraḥ**—bhagavad-vaṃśi-nāda-mādhurī-pratipādakam idaṃ gauḍīya-bhāṣôpanibaddham iti devena nâkalyate.*
***rājā**—aho citram. yad eṣaḥ—*
gauraḥ kṛṣṇa iti svayaṃ pratiphalan puṇyâtmanāṃ mānase
nīlâdrau naṭatîha saṃprathayate vṛndāvanīyaṃ rasam /
ādyaḥ ko 'pi pumān navôtsuka-vadhū-kṛṣṇânurāga-vyathâ-
svādī citram aho vicitram ahaho caitanya-līlāyitam //

but in aesthetics and literary theory, the fourth category of references I notice in this passage. The synthesis of theology and aesthetics is of course another speciality of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theory and practice, and a topic that is explicitly brought up throughout the play, and that indeed is touched on in this verse in words such as *rasa* and *āsvādī*. In what follows I hope to point out a few aspects of the notion of play that are relevant to the specific poetic techniques at work in the *Caitanyacandrodaya*, and in doing so I will use the word "play" to translate the Sanskrit term *līlā* and the various words for playing (*keli*, and so on), but also terms such as *nāṭya* that refer to stageplays or other artistic performances. I persist in this because I think the deliberate equation of such terms is a central concept in the religious and poetic outlook of our author.

That author was Paramānanda Sena, known as "Kavikarṇapūra," born in 1527 into a family of wealthy followers of Caitanya. His father was responsible for organizing the annual pilgrimage of Bengali devotees to Puri to visit Caitanya after he had moved there as an ascetic, an event that figures prominently both in Kavikarṇapūra's play about the life of the saint and in his stylistic approach to the depiction of that life.

A. Playing with Sounds: The Role of *Yamaka*s

The most obvious stylistic feature in the early portions of the play is the use of a special kind of phonetic repetition called *yamaka* ("twinning"), which involves a sequence of phonemes—usually two to four syllables—coming twice or more in succession, without any other sounds coming in between. To be significant this should be achieved through the juxtaposition of different words containing the necessary sounds, rather than merely by repeating a word. An example is when the stage manager refers in his first long sentence to a grove of *tamāla* trees with thick garlands of leaves, *ghana-dala-**māla-tamāla-ta**ru-kaḍamba*: here the sequence of three syllables '*mā la ta*' occurs twice in a row, not by repeating an individual word but by drawing on parts of three different words. As here, I will mark these *yamaka* repetitions with boldface type wherever it is relevant.

This device was common in the great prose *kāvya*s of Bāṇa and other poets, and remained common in the genre of the *campū*, a poem in fancy prose mixed with verses. Kavikarṇapūra wrote a work of his own in this genre, the massive *Ānandavṛndāvanacampū*, which tells the story of Kṛṣṇa's life in Vṛṇdāvana, and which is justly regarded as his greatest poetic work. There he uses this *yamaka* technique so steadily and consistently throughout the work that it has become the trademark of his style, easily recognizable as his own touch in contrast to the work of others, such as the *campū*s of Jīva Gosvāmin, in which *yamaka*s are used

alongside other ornament of sounds and interspersed with them rather than occurring steadily by themselves.

This same technique of recurring phonetic doubling is also the most prominent poetic feature in the early acts of Kavikarṇapūra's play. To illustrate the ways in which it is used on a larger scale it will be necessary to quote a couple of fairly long passages. The first example includes a long chunk of prose near the beginning of the play, and will serve also to summarize the points of Caitanya's movement that our author thought it most essential to know in reading the play:

*[**sūtradhāra**—]*
brahmânandaṃ ca bhittvā vilasati śikharaṃ
yasya yatrâtta-nīḍaṃ
rādhā-kṛṣṇâkhya-līlāmaya-khagama-mithunaṃ
bhinna-bhāvena hīnam /
yasya cchāyā bhavâdhva-śrama-śamana-karī
bhakta-saṃkalpa-siddher
hetuś caitanya-kalpa-druma iva bhuvane
kaścana prādurāsīt //7//

***pāripārśvikaḥ**—bhāva, kiṃ-prayo**jano janô**ha-dūro 'yam avatāraḥ.*

***sūtradhāraḥ**—māriṣa, **avadhehi vadhe hi** manaso nirviśeṣe 'śeṣe*
*pare brahmaṇi laya eva paraḥ puruṣârthaḥ. tat-sā**dhanaṃ dhanaṃ** hi*
*kevalam advaita-bhāvanêti sarva-śāstra-pratipā**dyatvenâdyatvenâ**pi*
*manvānānāṃ viduṣāṃ svamatâ**graha-graha**-gṛhītānām anākalitaṃ*
*tatra tatrâiva śāstreṣu gū**ḍhatayôḍhatayô**ttamatvena sthitam api*
*sac-cid-ānanda-ghana-vigraho nitya-līlo 'khila-sau**bhagavān***
***bhagavāñ** śrī-kṛṣṇa eva saviśeṣaṃ brahmêti tattvaṃ tasyôpāsanaṃ*
*sanandanâdy-upa**gītam avigītam avi**kalaḥ puruṣârthaḥ. tasya*
*sādhanaṃ **nāma nāma**-kīrtana-pradhānaṃ vividha-bhakti-yogam*
*āvirbhāvayituṃ bhagavāṃś **caitanyarūpī caitanyarūpī**-bhavann*
āvirāsīt.

***pāripārśvikaḥ**—bhāva, kiṃ **tenêha tene ha**riṇā svâbhimata-vyañjako*
granthaḥ.

***sūtradhāraḥ**—yady api ko na **veda veda**-kartṛtvaṃ bhagavatas tathâpi*
*khalv antar**yāmī yāmī**-hate preraṇāṃ na khalu sā bāhyôpa**deśato***
***deśato** vā kālataś ca paricchinnā bhavitum arhati.*

pāripārśvikaḥ**—bhāva, tarhi kathaṃ tatrâivodā**ra-mate ramate
na sarvaḥ.

***sūtradhāraḥ**—vividhavā**sanā-sanā**tho hi **loko lokô**ttare vartmani*
*kathaṃ sarva eva pravartatām. vāsanā-ba**ddhā śraddhâśra**yate*
hi bhedakatāṃ mater iti.

Stage manager—]

Caitanya appeared on earth like some sort of wishing tree,
towering above the impersonal bliss of brahma.
The pair of birds in the form of the play called Rādha-Kṛṣṇa,
devoid of difference, have built their nest in it.
Its shade gives rest to travelers on the road of *saṃsāra*,
and it grants to his devotees all that they desire.

Assistant—Master, what is the purpose of this descent, which is so difficult to comprehend?

Stage manager—Listen closely, sir. Although some learned men, obsessed with clinging to their own dogmas, believe to this day that all the scriptures teach, as the sole supreme goal of human life, absorption into the impersonal absolute of supreme *brahma* upon the dissolution of the mind, with the single treasure of meditation on nondualism as the means to attaining it, they have failed to take into consideration the true reality, which is qualified *brahma*, despite its being present throughout those very scriptures, where it is propounded on a deeper level as supreme, consisting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of existence, consciousness, and pure bliss, who is eternally at play, and who is the all-glorious Lord, the esteemed worship of whom, as sung by Sanandana and others, is the perfect goal of human life, having as its means of achievement predominantly the chanting of his name, with the various practices of devotion, to reveal which the Lord appeared in the form of consciousness as Caitanya.

Assistant—Master, has he, as Hari in this world, published any text indicating his own doctrine?

Stage manager—Although everyone knows that the Lord is the author of the Vedas, nevertheless the activity which the Inner Controller instigates is obviously not to be constrained in terms of outward instruction, place, or time.

Assistant—Master, all this being so, why does not everyone take delight only in that noble doctrine?

Stage manager—Because people are endowed with various residual impressions from the past, so how could everyone proceed along the transcendental path? Faith, being tied to residual impressions, has recourse to division of opinion.

In this passage the overall effect is quite like that of a *campū*, and similar examples can be taken from any portion of the first few acts that contains long sections of prose. In the very first long sentence spoken by the Stage Manager at the beginning of the play, for example, there are more than thirty such *yamaka*s.

My second example, which will illustrate the consistent use of *yamaka*s over a series of shorter statements in a dialogue, is from Caitanya's first extended conversation in the poem. Shortly after he first appears following his transformational experience, he unexpectedly asks a family friend, Śrīvāsa, if he has any memory of once having died and been revived. Śrīvāsa is shocked to hear this, and replies that in fact he does. At Caitanya's request he tells the whole story: as a young man he had lived an irresponsible life, until he was warned in a dream that he had only one year to live. He turned to religion and began to practice devotion to Kṛṣṇa. On the predicted day he did die, while listening to a recital of the Bhāgavata at Devānanda Paṇḍita's house, and fell from the porch onto the courtyard right in the middle of the story of Prahlāda. When he has told his story, Caitanya speaks again:

bhagavān—*niśāṃ* ***samayā sa mayā*** *svapno darśitaḥ*
pragata-jīvito ***'vito*** *'pi punar-jīvita-dānena.*
(sarve vismayaṃ nāṭayanti).
bhagavān—
sparśa-maṇeḥ sparśa-vaśāt
kanakībhāvaṃ prajātam iva loham /
tava tu tad eva śarīraṃ
nārada-śakti-praveśato 'nyad iva //52//
advaitaḥ—*evam etat. anyathā na mṛtaḥ punarjīvati, kiṃtu bhagavan, sarva evâite tava sva****bhāva-bhāva****-sahacarāḥ, tathâpi mad-bha****janena janena*** *śarīrântaram iva labhyate iti śi****kṣayā*** *a-****kṣayâ****nandena bhagavatêdam adhyavasitam. va****stutaḥ stuta****-mahimâyaṃ tava bhakti-****śrī-vāsaḥ śrivāsaḥ****.*
bhagavān—*advaita, satyam etat.*
advaitaḥ—*bhagavan, murāri-mukundâdayo'py ete tava dāsya****bhāva-bhāva-dātāro, dātāro*** *nayanânandasya.*
bhagavan—*advaita, antar* ***anayor a-nayo*** *mahān asti. ubhau sa-śaṅkaṃ ve****pāte pāte****na kuliśasyêva.*
advaitaḥ—deva, ko 'sau.
bhagavān—*murārer manasi na siddhyati bhakti-****raso rasô****na-daurgandhyam iva visāri-kāṭavam adhyātma-bhā****vanâvanâgraha-grah****ilatvam evâsti. yad ayam adyâpy anu****kṣaṇa-kṣaṇa*** *eva vāśiṣṭha-viṣaye.*
advaitaḥ—*kim aparāddham adhyātmayogena.*
bhagavān—*tvayā katham idam ucyate.*
yasya bhaktir bhagavati harau niḥśreyasêśvare /
vikṛḍato 'mṛtâmbhodhau kim anyaiḥ khātakôdakaiḥ //53//
advaitaḥ—*mukundena kim aparāddham.*

***bhagavān**—anena ni**rucyate. rucyate** hi bhagavataś catur-bhuja-rūpam eva tad evôpāsyam.*
***advaitaḥ**—kim idaṃ **matam a-matam** aho.*

The Lord—I showed you that dream at nighttime, and also saved you after you died by giving you life again.
(All act out their amazement).
The Lord—Just as iron becomes gold
by the touch of the philosopher's stone,
so your body has become as if another,
by the entrance of Nārada's power.
Advaita—So it is; otherwise a dead man could not live again. But, Lord, all these followers of yours here are naturally devoted to you; even so, our eternally blissful Lord decided to teach the lesson that through devotion to him a person can even gain another body. This is high praise of the greatness of Śrīvāsa, who is the abode of the glory of devotion to you.
The Lord—That's true, Advaita.
Advaita—Lord, Murāri and Mukunda here also give joy to the eye by preserving their abidance in service to you.
The Lord—Advaita, there is something very wrong inside them both.
Advaita—Lord, what is it?
The Lord—The *rasa* of devotion has not fully taken hold in Murāri's heart. He is obstinate in his addiction to the wilderness of Adhyātma philosophy, and this has a spreading bitterness, like a foul odor deficient in *rasa*, since even now he takes constant delight in studying the *Vāsiṣṭha*.
Advaita—What's wrong with the Adhyātmayoga?
The Lord—How can you ask this?
If one has devotion for Lord Hari,
the lord of the ultimate bliss,
and plays in the ocean of its nectar,
what need is there for waters
from wells or other sources?
Advaita—What's Mukunda's offense?
The Lord—He says that only the four-armed form of the Lord is pleasing, that only it should be worshipped.
Advaita—Well, is this a belief not to be held?

It becomes clear in the overall context of the play that Kavikarṇapūra's use of this distinctive technique of phonetic doubling is a way of marking his text as

being associated specifically with the playing of Caitanya in his *Navadvīpa-līlā*. It may be that the playfulness of the technique is intended to remind the reader of the playful aspect of the actions being described, and more specifically the doubling involved may be a kind of reference to the reoccurrence of roles that Karṇapūra believed was taking place in the lives of Caitanya and his associates. The next work he published after this play was the *Gauraganoddeśadīpikā*, a detailed listing of the persons associated with Caitanya and of their previous identities in the *Vṛndāvana-līlā* of Kṛṣṇa. It is probably no accident that in the first passage in which the *yamaka* technique is used in marking the speech of Caitanya himself, he is speaking, as we have just seen, of one such doubling, the identification of Śrīvāsa with Nārada.

There are several indications in the play of how very deeply this phonetic doubling was ingrained in Kavikarṇapūra's style while describing the *Navadvīpa-līlā*. One is the fact that in the early part of the play the device is as prominent in the long Prakrit passages as it is in the Sanskrit ones. Here is a single example, from the monologue of the Goddess of Devotion at the beginning of the second act (2.12):

*ammo, ko eso nirantara-garu-ovvea-veaṇā-jajjarijjanta-**māṇaso māṇa-sohagga-vibbhaṃsa-galāṇâṇaṇo mae paḍicijjantovi maṃ āloia loia-**bhiṇṇa-dasaṃ āvanno santo santosaṃ paāsaanto saaṃ todaṃ muñcanto vva idha āacchadi. hanta, amhāṇaṃ edādiśīe saṃpatti-paḍ**ipatti-paḍi**vādie suttha-dasāe bhāuṇo virāassa saṅgo saṅgo**caro ṇa hoi. ṇa āṇe du**jjanehiṃ kali-jaṇehiṃ kali**dâccāhido uvvario ṇa vetti.*

[Sanskrit translation:]

*aho, ka eṣa nirantara-gurûdvega-vedanā-jarjarita-mānaso māna-saubhāgya-vibhraṃśa-glānânano mayā paricīyamāno 'pi mām ālokya laukika-bhinna-daśām āpannaḥ san saṃtoṣaṃ prakāśayan svayaṃ todaṃ muñcann iva ita āgacchati. hanta, asmākaṃ etādṛśyāṃ saṃpatti-pratipatti-prati**pādinyāṃ sustha-daśāyāṃ bhrātur virāgasya saṅgaḥ saṃgocaro na bhavati. na jāne dur**janaiḥ kali-janaiḥ kali**tâtyāhita udvṛtto na vêti.*

Ah, who's this? His heart has been worn down by incessant, heavy sorrow and pain; his face has been exhausted by the loss of honor and good fortune. And being someone I'm acquainted with, now that he has seen me he's coming toward me, in some paranormal condition, showing satisfaction and apparently releasing his anguish. I don't know—it may not be such a good thing for me, in this state of wellness that gives me this awareness of fulfillment, to have

> contact with my brother Renunciation. I'm not sure whether or not he has survived being urged to disreputable behavior by the wicked people of the Kali age.

Note here that of the eight noticeable *yamaka*s in the Prakrit passage only two occur in the Sanskrit *chāyā* as well, which makes it clear that Kavikarṇapūra is not producing his Prakrit passages mechanically from a Sanskrit original, but is taking the considerable care necessary to ensure that the phonetic doublings are built into the Prakrit text itself. This procedure continues throughout the second act, which has a number of fairly long speeches in Prakrit.

Another evidence of the importance of the *yamaka* scheme to Kavikarṇ-apūra in the early part of the play is something I find very unusual: he tends to use them even in stage directions. A simple example is a stage direction referring to the Brahmin beggar Śuklāmbara (1.57):

> (*iti niḥ**sādhvasaṃ sādhv a-saṃ**kocena tat-pādayoḥ śiro nidadhāti.*)
> (Boldly and without shyness he places his good head at his feet.)

A more elaborate example is a stage direction describing Caitanya's mother (1.58):

> ***śacī**—(sa-camatkāra-vismayaṃ svânandâveśa-peśalam adbhu**ta-nayaṃ tanayaṃ** vilokya jāta-tad-anu**kampā kampā**yamāna-śarīrā vāg-deva**tâvatāra-**pratibhā-pratibhā**samānêva kiṃcid apāṭhīt.)*

> **Śacī**—(Seeing her son of wondrous behavior, lovely with the inflow of his own bliss, with delight and astonishment, she felt compassion for him, and with trembling body, shining like a reflection of an incarnation of the goddess of speech, she recited something.)

Here note also the unusual use of the past tense—"she recited something" (namely the verse that follows in the text of the play) rather than the normal "she recites"—which suggests that Kavikarṇapūra is thinking of the stage directions as descriptive parts of his poem rather than utilitarian devices, despite the fact that the play was apparently written for performance and performed in public shortly after its completion.

In other ways as well, beyond the use of *yamaka*, Kavikarṇapūra has a tendency to pack his stage directions with unusual burdens. In a another bit involving Caitanya's mother (5.27), he specifies a list of emotions to be enacted that seems more poetic than practical:

> ***mātā**—(sa-bhaya-bhakti-vātsalya-paritoṣa-balitâśru-pulaka-gadgadam. Saṃskṛtena.)*

vairāgyam eva bhava kiṃ kim u vânubhūtir
bhaktir nu vā kim u rasaḥ paramas tanūbhṛt /
tāta stanaṃdhayatayâiva bhavantam īkṣe
labdho 'dhunâpi na kadâpi punas tyajāmi //27//
(*iti sôtkaṇṭham āliṅgati.*)

Mother—(With tears, goosebumps, and a trembling voice, filled with fear, devotion, parental love, and contentment. In Sanskrit).
Whether you choose renunciation or enjoyment,
devotion or the highest *rasa* in bodily form,
I'll see you, Son, as a suckling baby.
And now that I've found you I'll never let you go.

Yet in other places the burden is urgently narrative, making it clear that he intended the play at least to be visualized as being performed. An example is a sequence of very dramatic action embedded in a stage direction in a scene set in the temple of Jagannātha (6.3):

(*praviśya pārṣadau śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanyam upasarpataḥ. bhagavān upasṛtya mūrdhānam avanamayati. eko mālāṃ prayacchati. bhagavān bahirvāso-'ñcalaṃ prasārayati. aparaḥ prasādânnaṃ prayacchati. bhagavān añcale kṛtvā śri-jagannāthaṃ praṇamyâiva siṃhavat tvarita-gatir niṣkrāntaḥ.*)

(Two attendants enter and approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. The Lord comes up to them and lowers his head. One puts a garland on him. The Lord holds out the edge of his outer garment. The other one gives him *prasāda*. The Lord takes it in the edge of his garment, bows to Śrī Jagannātha, and immediately charges out, running like a lion.)

But note that even here, despite the starkness of the physical description, he cannot help ending with a descriptive flourish in the phrase "like a lion."

B. The Renunciation of *Yamaka*s

The absence of any *yamaka*s in the last two passages points to a feature of Kavikarṇapūra's use of phonetic doubling that is just as striking as his persistent use of them in the early acts of the play—after the third or fourth act he stops using them altogether.

There could be several reasons for this. It could be that he just ran out of steam. Or it may be connected with the *campū*-like quality of the opening acts that I have mentioned. Perhaps he composed the play after he wrote his famous *campū*, rather than before it as is usually assumed, and began writing the play in the same style, but then gradually moved to a style more traditional for plays.

Or perhaps he even began writing the work as a *campū* rather than a play, and then converted it to a play at the request of King Pratāparudra, and completed it for performance.

I believe that the commissioning of the play by Pratāparudra did have an impact on the stylistic division in the play, but in a different way. The switch away from the continuous use of *yamaka* corresponds roughly to the switch in location within the play from Navadvīpa to Puri, where Caitanya moved in 1510; the greater portion of the play deals with events in the life of Caitanya after he left Navadvīpa, and only the first four acts of the ten-act play are set in the author's native Bengal. We may assume that Pratāparudra, and much of his audience, would be more interested in what happened in Puri, and so what is surprising about the play is not that so much of it is set in Puri, but rather that the author gives so much attention nonetheless to the earlier events in Navadvīpa and lavishes so much sound-play on the treatment of them.

Some of the passages in the later acts are strikingly prosaic in their narrative starkness, especially those that describe events directly involving the poet's own family or patron. I will give only one example, which is the report of a visit by Caitanya to the house of Kavikarṇapūra's father, Śivānanda. The passage describes an occasion of obvious importance to Kavikarṇapura's family, and he must have heard the details of the day described many times when he was growing up. He assumes that his audience will find each detail as riveting as he clearly does, and the passage is entirely devoid of any poetic ornamentation whatsoever—the facts may be exaggerated here and there, as always happens when partisans estimate the size of crowds, but there is not a single simile to be found. Caitanya has been on a visit to Bengal, traveling in the company of his personal assistant Jagadānanda, and his movements are being reported to the king by a government employee (9.13):

> Then he came to Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita's house in Kumārahaṭṭa. And there, while he was going from the bank of the Ganges to the house, at each place where the Lord put down his foot the path was made into a hollow, amazingly, by all the people rubbing it with their hands to take the dust from his feet. As soon as the Lord had gotten down there, Jagadānanda went off to Śivānanda's home, leaving the Lord at Śrīvāsa's. He stayed there so long that Jagadānanda demanded that the Lord be brought, and also made special arrangements to receive him.

Then—

> The tops of the walls, all the branches of the trees,
> the ground, every road, and every lane became filled
> with people shouting very loudly '*Hari bol!*'

Then the Lord, in the last part of the night,
started out in a boat, escorted by Śivānanda.

Then he went on the road to Śivānanda's house, which had been decorated along both sides by Jagadānanda with special arrangements of banana stems, pots, flower arrangements, and rows of lamps, and his face was very sweet with his smile at the thought that Jagadānanda had done this. When he saw a similarly prepared path on the left going to Vāsudeva's house he was uncertain which way to go, and was told by Vāsudeva, 'Lord, adorn Śivānanda's house, up ahead.' He did so, and entered his mansion, after Jagadānanda had taken the water from his feet. Later Jagadānanda himself took that water up to the roof of the house and distributed it to the staff of the household. Then, after staying some time, the Lord went to Vāsudeva's house and stayed there a while, then got back on the boat and started off again. There was such a turmoil of people standing neck deep to get the water from the Lord's feet that when he saw it he felt compassion and arranged for everyone to get water from his feet. Then all the people went on the path along the bank, and no one turned back.[2]

2. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 9.13:
tataḥ kumārahaṭṭe śrīvāsa-paṇḍita-vāṭīm abhyāyayau. tatra ca gaṅgā-tīrād vāṭī-paryanta-gamane yatra yatra padam arpayatîśas tatra pāda-rajasāṃ grahaṇāya prāṇi-paṇi-patanena sa panthā hanta gartamaya eva babhūva. tatôttīrṇa eva bhagavati jagadānandaḥ śivānandâlaye bhagavad-agocara eva gatavān. tatra tena ciram eva sthitam iti tad-āsaktyā bhagavān atrânetavya iti racanā-vaiśiṣṭyam api kṛtavān.

atha—

prācīrasyôpari viṭapināṃ sarva-śākhāsu bhūmau
rathyāṃ rathyām anu pathi pathi prāniṣu prāptavatsu /
uccair uccair vada harim iti prauḍa-ghoṣeṣu devo
rātri-śeṣe tarim adhi śivānanda-nītaḥ pratasthe //13//

tato jagānandenôbhayaoḥ pārśvayoḥ kadalīstambha-pūrnakumbha-mukula-dīpāvalībhiḥ su-racanā-viśeṣeṇa śivānanda-vāṭī-paryantam abhimaṇḍitaṃ vartmārūḍhaḥ smita-sumadhura-vadano jagadānanda-kṛtam iti manyamāno vāme vāsudeva-vāṭī-patham api tathāvidham ālokya kim ito 'gre gantavyaṃ kimita iti saṃdihāno vāsudevenôce. 'bhagavan, agrataḥ śivānanda-vāṭīm evâlaṃkuru' iti. tathā kurvāṇo jagadānandena dhārita-caraṇâmbujas tadīya-bhagavad-gṛhaṃ praviṣṭaḥ. anantaraṃ tac-caraṇôdakaṃ gṛha-paṭalôpari kiṃcid vikīrya kiyad antaḥpure parijanebhyo jagadānandenâiva dattam. anantaraṃ muhūrtaṃ sthitvā vāsudeva-vāṭīm āgatya kṣaṇam avasthāya punas taraṇim āruhya calitavati bhagavati caraṇa-jala-grahaṇārtham ākaṇṭha-magnānāṃ janānāṃ yad vaiyagryaṃ jātaṃ tad avalokya bhagavatas tathā karuṇa jātā yathā sarvair eva caraṇa-jalaṃ prāptam āsīt. tatas taṭa-vartmanâiva sarva-lokaś calitā na ke 'pi nivavṛtire.

Actually the abandonment of the *yamaka* texture can be located rather more precisely. It seems to me to coincide not with the move from Navadvīpa in general, but with the moment of its immediate cause, Caitanya's formal renunciation. Once he had become a *saṃnyāsin*, he could no longer live at home, but in a compromise with his mother he agreed to relocate in Puri, from where she could at least receive regular news about him. From then on large numbers of his Bengali devotees would come to visit him in Puri each year during the rainy season, under the guidance and funding of Kavikarṇapūra's father, but the heady days of his *līlā* in Bengal—an intense but remarkably short period, given the richness of its products, lasting little more than a year from the time of his transformation until his becoming a renunciant—were over.

The act of renunciation itself takes place offstage during the fourth act of the play, but from the beginning of the fourth act the probability of its occurrence is already heavy in the air, and the future Caitanya apparently has already made his decision in the tense meeting with his mother at the opening of the act. In the next scene he is jaunty as ever, and delivers what will prove to be the last genuine run of *yamaka*s in the play. Note, however, that at the very end of his statement the *yamaka* has gone a bit astray, broken by a brief intervention; this is a hint of the decline to come shortly. He has just determined that his followers, despite arriving late from a journey, still have the energy for some devotional activity (4.5):

> ***bhagavān***—*(sa-pramodam.) tad idānīṃ hima**kara-kara-kaladhauta-jala-dhaute** śrī**vāsa-vāsâṅgaṇa-parisare** bhagavat-saṃkīrtana**-maṅgalam aṅgī**kurvantu bhavantaḥ.*
>
> **The Lord**—(delightedly.) Then you should now engage yourselves in the auspicious activity of singing the praises of the Lord, in the area of the courtyard of Śrīvāsa's house, which has been washed with water clear as the silver of the rays of the moon.

When his proposal meets with a positive response, he gets up and heads for the courtyard, saying "Here I go" (*eṣo 'haṃ gacchāmi*). These are the last words he speaks in the play in his identity as the Brahmin Viśvaṃbhara Miśra. He disappears for several days, and when he reappears to his anxious followers he has become a renunciant ascetic named Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

The precise moment when the *yamaka*s end, as far as I can hear, is in a speech made during Caitanya's absence by the most senior member of the Vaiṣṇava community, Advaitācārya (4.2). He is looking back on the last dancing session they had, and in his longwinded fashion he struggles with the task of comprehending the nature of the Lord's *līlā*. Note carefully the phonetic texture of the first sentence, which begins with some legitimate *yamaka*s but then rapidly begins to sputter, with the insertion of other sounds between the repeated

sequences, until the repetitions die out completely about a third of the way through the sentence, never to return. Presumably this is the moment when Caitanya, in his undisclosed location, is becoming a *saṃnyāsin*.

vastutas tu ***koṭi-koṭi****-jagad-aṇḍa-****ghaṭa-ghaṭa****na-****vighaṭa****na-nāṭaka-****paripāṭī-pāṭa****vasya nija-****carita-lalita****-kīrti-su****dhā-dhā****vita-jagaj-jana-hṛdayâ****vaṭa-ghaṭa****māna-tamaḥ-kāṭavasya bhagavatas tathâiva līlāyitaṃ khalu pratyakṣânumānôpamāna-śabdārthâpatty-aitihyâdi-pramāṇa-nivahair api na pramātuṃ śakyate vinā tasyâivânugraha-janya-jñāna-viśeṣam. tena tadānīṃtanam alaukika-camatkāra-kāraṇam asmin niṣṭhamapinaṭana-līlāyitaṃnâsmākamanubhava-gocarastadvyavasitam. Tena—*

yāsyanti ke 'pi mohaṃ
vivadiṣyante ca taiḥ samaṃ kecit /
kecana saṃdarbha-vido
rahasyam idam ity avaiṣyanti //

But actually, when the Lord—who after all has skill enough to arrange the stage play of creating and destroying, millions of times, the pot that is the cosmic egg from which the universe comes, and who washes away with the nectar of the glory of his own graceful actions the bitterness of the darkness that lurks deep inside the hearts of people in this world—when the Lord plays in that way, it is clearly impossible to really understand it without the special knowledge produced by the grace of the Lord himself, even with the aid of perception, inference, analogy, testimony, tradition, and all the other means of knowledge. So I am convinced that my dancing on that occasion, which caused such an extraordinary aesthetic impact, was actually played out by him, and is not accessible to my own experience. Therefore—

Some will be confused,
and some will debate with them,
and some who are expert critics will realize
it's a mystery.

The end of the *līlā* in the form in which they had known it, perhaps foreshadowed by Advaita's brooding disavowal of his own experience in the dance, is made explicit by him in the dramatic scene in which the renunciation is revealed to him and his fellow devotees. The news is brought by Caitanya's uncle Ācāryaratna, who had gone with him when he left:

Ācāryaratna—Oh no, how can this wretch tell them?
Advaita—Tell what happened.
Ācāryaratna—(in his ear.) So.
Advaita—Alas, how can we hide this matter behind a hand?

So tell it plainly. Everyone listen. (Out loud, with tears.)

All those sessions of chanting,
those stage plays, those tableaux,
alas, have now come to an end.
All those words, sweet with our laughter
and loving sport, must stay in our hearts—
that love and that compassion, alas,
will remain in memory alone.
By your renunciation, Lord,
you have composed
the destruction of all we had.[3]

In the next act, when he is able to discuss the matter with Caitanya face to face, Advaitācārya—who, as we have seen, had long ago learned that everything is *līlā*—complains about the renunciation in terms of *līlā*. But Caitanya responds by completing Advaita's unfinished verse jokingly, with a play on Advaita's name—a running joke in the play, used as a sly way of taking a dig at the impersonal nondualism of Śaṅkara and alluding to Caitanya's preferred stance of *acintya-bhedâbheda* ("unfathomable difference-and-nondifference").

Advaitācārya—What play have you arranged,
that you have taken up the state of a renunciate,
which is so dear to the Advaitins?
The Lord—(laughing)
Don't you remember, Advaita?
I'm no lover of the Advaita.
There's so much difference,
in form and gender,
between it and you.[4]

3. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 4.36:
ācāryaratnaḥ—*hanta bhoḥ, kim eṣa pāmaraḥ kathayatu.*
advaitaḥ—*kathaya kiṃ vṛttam.*
ācāryaratnaḥ—*(karṇe.) evam eva.*
advaitaḥ—*hanta, katham ayaṃ kareṇa pidhāpanīyo 'rthaḥ. tat sphuṭaṃ kathaya. sarve śṛṇvantu. (iti sa-baṣpam uccaiḥ.)*
tās tāḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-kautuka-kalā hā dhik samāptiṃ gatās
tās taḥ prema-vilāsa-hāsa-madhurā vācaḥ sthitā no hṛdi /
sā prītiḥ karuṇā ca sā śiva śiva smṛty-eka-śeṣâbhavan
saṃnyāsena tava prabho viracitaḥ sarvasva-nāśo hi naḥ //
4. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 5.21:
advaitaḥ—
kêyaṃ līlā vyaraci bhavatā yo 'yam advaita-bhājām
atyantêṣṭas tam adhṛta bhavān āśramaṃ yat turīyam /

Caitanya receives a more bitter response from his family friend Śrīvāsa, whose revivification we have already read about. Again it is expressed in terms of a reflection on *līlā*:

> Once I died and you, amazingly, brought me back to life.
> Having revived me, how can you now, amazingly, kill me again?
> This is bad play on your part, Lord, and I can't understand it.
> Can it be that God can play only the part of a child?[5]

This is not to say that Caitanya will stop dancing or that poetry will cease in the play. The change in Caitanya's status brings changes in his behavior—he will no longer have any contact with women, for example—and his Bengali associates apparently feel a strong sense of separation from the earlier phase, coinciding with the dropping of the use of *yamaka*s, but the author continues to use sound effects of other kinds, and to pursue his idiosyncratic techniques such as the use of stage directions as vehicles of lingering description. Note the fairly extensive alliteration in the absence of genuine *yamaka*s in this ornate state direction from a scene in Puri (8.50):

> *(tataḥ praviśati nṛtyânandânubhava-nispando nimīlita-nayano nayanâbhirāma upavana-maṇḍapam adhyâsya prasāryamāṇa-lolac-caraṇa-kamala-nāla-daṇḍa-yugalo galal-locana-jala-dhauta-vakṣāḥ sākṣād iva premânandaḥ śri-kṛṣṇa-caitanyaḥ pratitaru-mūlam ekaikam upaviṣṭās tūṣṇīkāḥ pārṣadāś ca.)*
>
> (Then enters Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, motionless from the experience of the rapture of the dance, his eyes closed, himself pleasing to the eyes, sitting in a pavilion in the garden, like ecstatic love incarnate, his two legs stretched out in front of him like movable stalks for his lotus feet, his chest washed by the water falling from his eyes; and also his companions, seated in silence, each at the base of a separate tree.)

Note also that much of the detail mentioned here would be difficult to convey on stage.

bhagavān—*(vihasya)*
bho advaita smara kimu vayaṃ hanta nâdvaita-bhājo
bhedas tasmiṃs tvayi ca yad iyān rūpato liṅgataś ca //

5. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 4.23:
pūrvaṃ mṛtaḥ katham aho bata jīvito 'haṃ
bhūyo 'pi mārayasi kiṃ bata jīvayitvā /
durlīlatā tava vibho na mano-'dhigamyā
nanv īśvaro bhavati kevala-bāla-līlaḥ //

C. Playing with Identities: The Role of Roleplayings

For an outside reader, a good part of what is interesting in the later acts of the play is the contest of wills between Caitanya and some of the powerful people he meets after leaving Navadvīpa, and especially the two very different characters of the augustly intellectual Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the most important scholar in Puri at the time, and the wild Śūdra mystic Rāmānanda Rāy, who has been appointed by the king as his governor in the southern province of Kaliṅga. They react to Caitanya in clearly contrasting ways, but both express their reactions in the language we have come to expect, by referring to his *līlā*.

For Sārvabhauma the struggle to understand Caitanya is a long and difficult one. He is eventually won over by him emotionally, but still does not feel that he has any way to come to grips with him in rational terms, as he says in commenting on the paradox that struck him at his first meeting with Caitanya, that of the apparent conflict between his play and his asceticism:

> (Approaching the Lord, prostrating himself, and joining his palms together.)
>
> Even when I directly perceive
> the Lord as he does his earthly play
> under the spell of the various *rasa*s of play,
> I cannot really know him.
> Sadly, a man cannot know the philosopher's stone
> just by seeing it, until by its touch
> it turns mere iron completely into gold.
>
> Lord, you are Viṣṇu, the husband of Śrī,
> abiding within the hearts of your people,
> yet you travel upon the earth,
> disguised as an ascetic.
> How can we here, so much like beasts,
> clearly experience you, so great in your power?
> Fate, alas, is against us.[6]

6. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 6.32–33:
(upasṛtya bhagavantaṃ daṇḍavat praṇamyâñjaliṃ baddhvā.)
nānā-līlā-rasa-vaśatayā kurvato loka-līlāṃ
sākṣātkāre 'pi ca bhagavato nâiva tat-tattva-bodhaḥ /
jñātuṃ śaknoty ahaha na pumān darśanāt sparśa-ratnaṃ
yāvat sparśāj janayatitarāṃ lohamātraṃ na hema //
sva-jana-hṛdaya-sadmā nātha padmâbhinātho
bhuvi carasi yatîndra-cchadmanā padma-nābhaḥ /

In contrast, Rāmānanda Rāy instinctively understands Caitanya, as the king knew he would when he suggested to Caitanya that he visit Rāmānanda during his trip in the south (the king admitted that he had always thought Rāmānanda Rāy a little crazy, so that he was sure the two of them would have a lot in common). Rāmānanda too speaks of Caitanya's *līlā*, but sees no conflict with his asceticism:

> (Then he divided the hair on his head into two parts and wrapped it around his feet, prostrating himself and saying,)
>
> You are that same lord of my heart,
> the foremost master of *rasa*,
> my guru in the playing of plays filled with *rasa*.
> How can I praise you?
> This is natural to you, to be able
> to take on various roles.
> Therefore this role of ascetic
> does not surprise me.[7]

Kavikarṇapūra's attention to the phenomenon of roleplaying reaches its highest pitch near the end of the part of the *Caitanyacandrodaya* in which his rich *yamaka*s are still in use, in the form of a fascinating play within the play, presented in Act 3. Caitanya, who at this point has not yet become a renunciate ascetic and is still a Brahmin named Viśvambhara, has decided to direct a play about the episode of Kṛṣṇa's life in Vṛndāvana known as the *Dānakeli* or "toll game." In this episode, Rādhā and her girlfriends have been gathering wildflowers and other offerings to present to the deity Śiva Gopīśvara (that is, the lord of the *gopī*s or cowherd girls), who has been appointed by Kṛṣṇa to decide who will be admitted to the *Rāsalīlā* dance. But Kṛṣṇa and his friends play a game of demanding that Rādha and the other *gopī*s pay a toll (*dāna*) in compensation for what they have gathered.

Caitanya arranges for the play to be performed in the courtyard of the house of his uncle Candraśekhara Ācāryaratna, and Caitanya himself assigns the various roles in the play to individuals in his circle of friends and followers.

katham iha paśukalpās tvām analpânubhāvaṃ
prakaṭam anubhavāṃo hanta vāmo vidhir naḥ //

7. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 7.17:
(tadā cikura-kalāpaṃ dvidhā kṛtvā tenâiva tac-caraṇa-yugaṃ veṣṭayitvā nipatya gaditam,)
mahā-rasika-śekharaḥ sa-rasa-nātya-līlā-guruḥ
sa eva hṛdayêśvaras tvam asi me kumu tvāṃ stumaḥ /
tavâitad api sāhajaṃ vividha-bhūmikā-svīkṛtir
na tena yati-bhūmikā bhavati no 'tivismāpinī //

The number of levels of representation involved is then increased by the addition of two further layers of characters. First, the play is presented as if it were being performed by a troupe of actors at the request of the divine sage Nārada, who appears as a character. Second, several allegorical personifications are also added as characters, in the fashion of the earlier allegorical drama, the *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇamiśra, to provide a framework of commenting observers.

An even richer source of complication is the fact that the associates of Caitanya who take part in the play are considered to be, in real life, reappearances of the figures involved in the events that took place in Vṛndāvana: the "*Vṛndāvana-līlā*" of Kṛṣṇa and his associates being depicted in the play performed for Nārada is paralleled by the "*Navadvīpa-līlā*" of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and his associates in Bengal, acting as a kind of very long-running repertory company in real life, with the casting later catologued in detail by Kavikarṇapūra in the lists of correspondences given in his *Gauragaṇoddeśadīpikā*.

To make things still more complicated, the casting done by Caitanya for the play within the play does not completely follow these actual correspondences. Although he assigns some persons the task of playing the individuals they really were in their earlier lives in Vṛndāvana, others are assigned by Caitanya to play the roles of individuals who have now appeared as someone else, and still others are assigned by him to jobs on the stage crew, including the curtain handler (Vāsudevācārya, who in Vṛndāvana had been a *gopī*), the ticket manager (Caitanya's classmate Śrīvāsa), the doorman (his former neighbor Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍita, who had been Nārada's friend Parvata), and the security guard (his uncle Candraśekhara Ācāryaratna).

The result is a dizzying number of levels of representation. Members of the audience at a performance of the *Caitanyacandrodaya* would have found themselves watching the allegorical character Love of God (Premabhakti, who along with her friend Friendship is invisible to the other characters in the play within the play) watching Nārada (who is visible to Love of God and to Friendship but hidden from the other characters, and who is played by himself in the person of Caitanya's family friend Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, who had already been Nārada in his life in Vṛndāvana, and who doubles as ticket collector) watching Kṛṣṇa (who has now reappeared as Kṛṣṇa Caitanya but who as Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in the play within the play is played by Caitanya's elder associate Advaitācārya, who in real life is the head of the Vaiṣṇavas in Navadvīpa and an incarnation of the god Śiva who in the play within the play is being worshipped by Rādhā) watching Rādhā (played by herself in the person of Caitanya, who is actually both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā together), and so on.

To this must be added, as another level of representational complication, the devices through which most Sanskrit plays provide an extra level by having some

of the actors appear on stage at the beginning of the play as the stage manager and his associates, before reappearing as characters within the play. Caitanya assigned to some of these tasks persons identified by Kavikarṇapūra as having been associates of Vaiṣṇava avatars who appeared earlier than Kṛṣṇa. Thus the stage manager (*sūtradhāra*) in the play within the play was Haridāsa Ṭhakkura, a Muslim who was a reappearance of the Prahlāda associated with the man-lion avatar Nṛsiṃha. The casting of the stage manager's mother-in-law was more complex; she appears in the play within the play as an old woman accompanying Rādhā, and played by Yogamāyā in disguise, who was in turn played by Caitanya's spiritual "elder brother" Nityānanda Avadhūta, considered to be a reapparance not only of Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma but also of Lakṣmaṇa, brother of the earlier avatar Rāma.

One of the most striking things about all of this turbulence of identities is that it should be found in a Sanskrit play that to modern eyes is more firmly grounded in real-life history than any Sanskrit play before it. Outside the play within the play, most of the numerous characters who appear in the *Caitanya-candrodaya* are persons about whose actual lives a great deal is known. The houses in which some of them lived are still standing today and are now tourist attractions. And this fits with the new emphasis on historical documentation that can be seen in the work of associates of Caitanya such as Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, who had been high government officials in the Muslim administration of Bengal, and of Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the earliest important Sanskrit writers from whom we have handwritten documents.

But the same attention to record-keeping is reflected in Kavikarṇapūra's detailed cataloguing of the correspondences between the figures who lived in Vṛndāvana and those living in Navadvīpa. More importantly, the playing of roles is essential to their spiritual lives, not merely on the superficial level of acting in little dramas like the play within the play, which is something they are described as having done in real life, but especially because play and playacting are central aspects of their theology.

A good deal of information on Kavikarṇapūra's understanding of this point is fortunately available in his treatise on poetics, the *Alaṅkārakaustubha*, in which he repeatedly emphasizes that aesthetic savoring is essential to both the poet and the audience. Here I can outline only briefly four areas in which his remarks on poetics differ from the views of a standard earlier text such as the *Kāvyaprakāśa* of Mammaṭa that are relevant to our topic:

1. The production of poetry requires *śakti* (capability or talent), not *śāstra* (learning or training).

2. Each level of poetry can be bumped up a notch in quality by the use of appropriate phonetic textures. Where the works of Kavikarṇapūra are concerned, for the highest level of poetry this means *yamaka* patterns like those in the *campū* and the play; for the lower levels it corresponds to features in some of his minor poems. In this regard his treatise represents regional Sanskrit poetics carried to the extreme of a personal poetics for an individual poet.
3. The level of poetry can also be bumped up by the use of suggestion within suggestion. The extra layer of suggestion comes from a knowledge of the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, which doubles the depth of the poem.
4. The real goal of poetry is immersion in the play of Kṛṣṇa for both the poet and the audience.

Kavikarṇapūra's repeated insistence here on the similarities between the role of the poet and the role of the spectator is, to my mind, the deeper meaning of the story of how his sucking Caitanya's big toe in his infancy led to his power as poet: it was not simply that Caitanya poured the power of a poet into him in this way, but more importantly that he learned that *āsvāda*, the experience of savoring, must belong not only to the reader but to the poet as well. In the play within the play, this notion is extended to include the actors also, an idea already built into the role of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya as actor. Love of God speaks as follows:

This play of Hari is full of *rasa*
even when it's acted out by actors.
But when the Lord himself enacts it
together with his people—
do I need to explain?
The doctrine is well known
that in any acting
the spectators feel *rasa*,
not the actors.
But look—when the subject is transcendent,
how can there be a contradiction
if both, being both, experience the *rasa*?
That's why Kṛṣṇa's earthly acting
has even more poetic force
than his transcendental acts.
That's the reason for the play:
because its power

to draw in the people of this world
somehow makes them transcendent.[8]

Given the layers at work in the play within the play, not just of acting (Caitanya directing a play in which he, as Rādha-Kṛṣṇa, plays Kṛṣṇa, and so on) but also of spectating (our watching Love of God watching Nārada watching Kṛṣṇa watching Rādhā, and so on), it is in this episode that the *Caitanyacandrodaya* achieves a particularly rich density of superimposed layers and resulting depth. In their illuminating essay on Vedāntadeśika as a poet, Yigal Bronner and David Shulman have shown how he used the image of being in deep water to convey his own sense of the depth of his poetic experience.[9] Kavikarṇapūra, in one of the opening verses of his famous *campū*, uses a similar image; for him the depth is the depth of Kṛṣṇa's play, and Poetry is someone he takes along for the ride, out of gratitude for her help:

Mother Speech, through your compassion
I have incessantly found joy.
But can I praise you through yourself?
Who would offer water to the sea?
Here's how I will repay you—
I will immerse you
in the flow of the nectar of Lord Kṛṣṇa's play,
from which, I pray, I never may emerge.[10]

8. *Caitanyacandrodaya* 3.56:
yêyaṃ naṭair apy abhinīyamānā
līlā harer eti rasāyanatvam /
sā yat svakīyaiḥ svayam īśvareṇâ-
bhinīyate tat kim udāharāmaḥ //56//
sāmājikānāṃ hi raso naṭānāṃ
nâivêti panthāḥ kṛtiṣu prasiddhaḥ /
hantôbhayatve rasavittvam eṣām
alaukike vastuni ko virodhaḥ //57//
alaukikāl laukikam eva śaurer
vṛttaṃ camatkāri tad eva līlā /
ākarṣakatvaṃ hi jagaj-janānām
alaukikatvasya sa ko 'pi hetuḥ //58//

9. Bronner and Shulman 2006, 10–11. Their paper served as the starting point of the summer academy in Jerusalem, devoted to regional Sanskrit literatures, at which the first draft of this essay of mine was presented, and I thank the two of them for both the workshop and their comments.

10. *Ānandavṛndāvana Campū* 1.8:
mātar vāṇi tavâniśaṃ karuṇayā labdha-pramodā vayaṃ
kiṃ nu tvāṃ stumahe tvayâiva yajatāṃ toyena kas toyadhim /
etat pratyupakurmahe bhagavataḥ kṛṣṇasya līlâmṛta-
srotasy eva nimajjayāmi bhavatīṃ nôttheyam asmāt punaḥ //

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24

Modernity in Sanskrit?

Viswanatha Satyanarayana's Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham*

Velcheru Narayana Rao

"May your husband love you like Yayāti loved Śarmiṣṭhā" is the blessing sage Kaṇva gives his foster daughter Śakuntalā, when she leaves him to live with her new husband Duṣyanta.[1] It may look like a rather strange blessing, considering the twisted path Śarmiṣṭhā and Yayāti had to follow in pursuit of their prohibited love. The *Mahābhārata* tells us their very familiar story, that I will briefly retell.

It begins with Kaca, a young man from the gods, who is sent with a mission to learn from Śukra, the teacher of the demons,the *mṛta-sanjīvani*, the mantra that brings dead people back to life. It would not be an easy task, because Śukra has not taught it to any of his students. Kaca is instructed in advance—be attentive to Devayānī, whom her father, Śukra, loves more than anyone else. Kaca pays devoted attention to her and at the end of his successful mission, when he leaves, Devayānī, who believes he loves her, asks him to marry her. When Kaca refuses, saying that she is like his sister, a jilted Devayānī curses him that the mantra he has learnt deceptively would not work for him, and he, in turn, curses her that no Brahmin man will marry her.

* My thanks are due to Jonnalagadda Prabhakara Sastry who patiently opened the play for me explaining the grammatical problems, and correcting typographical errors in the printed text, and to Yigal Bronner who read several drafts of my essay and made insightful comments. David Shulman and Gary Tubb gently pushed me to complete the essay, moving deadlines, which I repeatedly missed. A version of this paper was presented at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference in 2009 in Kyoto, Japan. My thanks are due to the discussants and respondants.

1. Kālidāsa, *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, Act IV.

Now Devayānī has to look for a proper husband who should come from the next best rank—a Kṣatriya. One day Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā along with many girlfriends go into the woods to play. They swim in the lake leaving their clothes on the bank. Meanwhile Indra creates a whirlwind in which all the clothes get jumbled up. When they come out of the water, no one finds their clothes in the place where they were left, and in a hurry they take whatever clothes they put their hands on. In this jumble, Devayānī gets Śarmiṣṭhā's clothes and Śarmiṣṭhā is left with Devayānī's. Śarmiṣṭhā wears Devayānī's clothes all right, but Devayānī refuses to wear Śarmiṣṭhā's clothes, because she, Devayānī, is a Brahmin girl and Śarmiṣṭhā is a Kṣatriya girl and therefore of a lower class. Śarmiṣṭhā taunts Devayānī saying, "Your father lives by the wages paid by my father, the king." A quarrel ensues and Śarmiṣṭhā throws Devayānī in a dry well and leaves with her maids in a huff.

Meanwhile King Yayāti happens to go by that way. Thirsty and looking for water to drink, he sees this girl in the well hanging by the root of a tree. He helps her come out, holding her by her right hand, and goes his way. Devayānī does not want to go home without teaching Śarmiṣṭhā a lesson. She lingers in the woods until her father, the great Śukra, comes in search of her and hears all that has happened to her. Devayānī insists that she will not come home until the king (Vṛṣaparvan) makes Śarmiṣṭhā her slave for life. Śukra threatens to leave the king's service unless Devayānī's wish is fulfilled. Śukra holds the power of life and death over all the demons, and the king has no alternative but to give in to this wish. Devayānī now holds Śarmiṣṭhā with all her retinue as her slave for life.

On another day, Devayānī goes to the same woods along with Śarmiṣṭhā, now her slave, along with her retinue, when Yayāti comes there again. When Devayānī sees him she reminds him that she is the woman whom he had taken by his right hand, thus "marrying" her. Yayāti is not ready to take her as his wife until Śukra assures him that his marriage with a Brahmin woman does not make him a law-breaker.

Śukra arrives, absolves him of the *dharmic* violation and approves of the marriage. Śarmiṣṭhā follows Devayānī as her slave, and Śukra admonishes the king to attend to all her needs, except calling her to bed.

In the course of time Śarmiṣṭhā grows up to be a woman, her season ripe for giving birth to children. She appeals to Yayāti that as a slave, her friend's husband is her husband as well. Yayāti sees that it would be a greater violation of law if he does not sleep with her when she is in her season—for he would be committing aborticide. In course of time Śarmiṣṭhā gives birth to three sons: Druhyu, Anu, and Puru.

Devayānī finds out what happened and goes to her father to report her husband's transgression. Śukra, angered by this insolence, curses Yayāti to become

instantly old. On repenting, Śukra grants a way out, that if any of his sons gives his youth to Yayāti in exchange for his old age, he may get back to his pleasures. This works out well for Yayāti when he takes his youngest son Puru's youth in return for his old age, and after many long years of enjoying the pleasures of youth, he gives the youth back to him.

This is the *Mahābhārata* story in summary.[2] It is a narrative of great potential for later authors and was creatively used by several in both Sanskrit and regional languages,[3] but not in modern Sanskrit until Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1895–1976) gave it a provocative new interpretation. Before I go on, let me introduce Satyanarayana.

A. Viswanatha Satyanarayana: An Introduction

If in 1940 a poet in India writes in an archaic language and in meters that have been rejected by all modern poets, it is difficult to call him a modern poet. That is what Viswanatha Satyanarayana did in Telugu. Being modern at this time is clearly defined by most of the writers as being anti-traditional. Modern poets wrote on contemporary themes, wrote with a liberal agenda, and advocated socialist ideals. They were against caste, against religion, against Brahmin superiority, and some of them were clearly in favor of class war and revolution. Satyanarayana, on the other hand, wrote about Hindu gods and *dharma*, retold Purāṇic stories, and extolled Sanskrit texts.

Moderns spoke of social consciousness, feeling, realism, and mostly adopted a vague western literary critical mode and quoted western writers from Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot. Satyanarayana spoke of *rasa, aucitya, vakrokti*, and *dhvani* and quoted Abhinavagupta, Mammaṭa, and a variety of *alaṅkāra* texts from Sanskrit. This was a language the moderns had abandoned some 40 years ago.

Marginalization of Sanskrit gave precedence to new poets and critics who took pride in their ignorance of old texts. They read English poets and Western philosophers, thought in English, and even wrote their personal letters, notes, diaries, and journals in English. Evaluations of modern literature began to be

2. *Mahābhārata*, 1.70–80.

3. In the late thirteenth century, a Sanskrit play based on this story was written by Pratāparudra of the Kākatīya dynasty, titled *Yayāti-caritram*. In the late sixteenth century, a Telugu *kāvya, Yayāti-caritramu*, was written by Ponnekanti Telaganarya. As for modern adaptations of this theme: we have, in Telugu, *Pururava*, a play by Gudipati Venkata Calam, popularly known as Chalam, written circa 1947; in Marathi, *Yayāti*, a novel, by V. S. Khandekar, written in 1959; and in Kannada, *Yayāti*, a play written by Girish Karnad in 1960, later revised and translated into English by the author (see references for available editions of these works).

heavily based on political and social ideologies, rather than on literary sensibilities and modes of presentation. A modern writer has to reject caste, avoid erotic descriptions, deny religious superstition, and advocate and depict progressive ideas about women and the lower castes. Once he does this, he is modern, never mind if his literary sensibilities are not refined. Since Satyanarayana did not fit this bill, he was unambiguously classified as old-fashioned and retrograde.

When Satyanarayana began to write Telugu poetry, a style of poetry that was called *bhāvakavitvam*, poetry of feeling, was popular. Under the impact of English romantic poetry and the influence of Rabindranath Tagore, bhāvakavis created a style of poetry which rejected erotic descriptions of earlier poets and sang in a subjective and somewhat mystical language of an imagined woman they love. The woman the poets describe often does not have a name, or for that matter, even a body—the most they talk about is her eyes and dark hair, and of course her heart. The best among the bhāvakavis, such as Devulapalli Krishna Sastri wrote some truly superior poems crafting their words to blend with one another to produce a musical fluidity. Their lines lift the reader's mind to lofty heights on the wings of soft sounds. One criticism against these poets was that their verses are so soft and smooth that the readers get captivated in their music and forget to look for their meaning. You think that there is some heavenly meaning in them but you do not know for sure what it is. For a time the Telugu literary world, especially the young men and women, were swayed by this poetry. On top of that, the bhāvakavis made it their mission to reject the pundits and their knowledge of *alaṅkāra-śāstra*. They viewed the pundits as fossilized remnants of a dead past, with no imagination or sensitivity to poetry. The title of their official anthology *Vaitāḷikulu* (Harbingers of Dawn), which includes the best *Bhāvakavitvam* that appeared over a period of some 20 years, indicates the proud position they credited to themselves as those who wake up people in the morning after a dark night, which suggests that the period that immediately preceded their emergence is one of darkness. This highlights their opposition to the *śastric* rules and regulations the pundits insist on before they approve of any new poetry. Reflecting the values of a new Victorianized middle-class elite, the bhāvakavis adapted the western concept of platonic love, calling the love they write about *amalina śṛṅgāra* (unblemished love). Love is heavenly for them, it gives them immortality, the girl they love is the goddess herself and all they want from her is to allow them to adore her, write poems about her. For instance, here are two poems from two major bhāvakavis who wrote during the 1930s. Vedula Satyanarayana Sastri wrote of such an imagined *preyasī*:

āme navanīta-hṛdaya nā y'antaraṅga
śānti-devata āśā-pathântarāla-

pārijātammu prema-jīvana-vibhāta-
kaiśikī-gīti nā tapaḥ kalpa-valli[4]

She has a tender heart, soft like butter.
She is my goddess of peace in the inner reaches of my heart,
an auspicious song heard in the path of my hope.
She is the giving vine of all my wishes,
the fruit of all my prayers.

Devulapalli Krishna Sastri wrote this famous poem describing the eyes of his imagined love:

Her eyes have in them
dark shadows from an endless sky.

In places you see
hues of sleep
from the depths of a calm, clear pond.

Sometimes you hear in them
murmurs of darkness that hide at the end of day
in crooked paths
that meander through the *nīpa* leaves.

At other times
tears from monsoon clouds
hide in her eyes.

They are poems
that sparkle
with a beauty you've never known,
and will never fully understand.[5]

Krishna Sastri even called his dream love Ūrvaśi, adopting the name of an *apsarā*, a god's woman. Major shifts in subjectivity and sensibilities that emerged after the nineteenth century, primarily articulated in Europe, and that had an influential impact on the Indian mind are left outside the realm of Sanskrit literary theory. In fact, some of these shifts in sensibilities that are prominently observed in European literature occurred earlier than the nineteenth century in several Indian literatures as well, but they are not noticed because of the general,

4. *Vaitāḷikulu*, p. 69. Translation mine.

5. Telugu original from *Vaitāḷikulu* (p. 56); translation from my *Hibiscus on the Lake*, p. 34.

somewhat uncritical clubbing of all pre-nineteenth century Indian literature under the cover word "traditional." Modern, in this way of thinking, begins with the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, after the impact of English is felt on Indian languages. Because Sanskrit is treated as a dead language, no one even bothered to ask if anything like modernity is possible in Sanskrit. Furthermore, contemporary poets who wrote in Sanskrit—and there are many from all over India—wrote following images, ideas, diction, and styles of great Sanskrit poets of the past ages. They are modern only in their theme.

Satyanarayana detested the philosophy of unblemished love of the bhāvakavis, their lack of understanding of classical Telugu poetry, and their shallow opposition to tradition. He was trained differently, under major Sanskrit scholars of his time, and was a student of the famous Cellapilla Venkata Sastry in Telugu poetry. He wrote in a style distinctly unlike the bhāvakavis. His images and diction reminded his readers that he was on a par with the past masters of Telugu poetry. He presented himself as a defender of tradition, with respect for the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and *Śāstras*. But in the process he masked his own modernity and innovative impulses in his poetry. On the surface he looked incorrigibly conventional but, if you scratch the surface, he was fiercely unconventional and fearlessly revisionist. This double-edged personality still remains, muffled by the general din his opponents as well as his admirers generate, with one group presenting him as retrograde while the other extols him as the present-day Vālmīki. My plan here is to argue that he is neither old-fashioned nor retrograde. He is not modern like his contemporaries, who have an ideological agenda of rejecting the past as an impediment to progress. Satyanarayana is differently modern: his poetics and aesthetics are modern, closer to a kind of modernism, we might say, while his language, meters, and themes are conventional. His Sanskrit play allows me an opportunity to show this in some detail.

In this context an important question arises: Is Sanskrit capable of representing modernity or is it permanently frozen in the past, not just lexically and syntactically, but in images, modes of feeling, and sensibilities?

My answer to the second part of this question is no. Sanskrit *can* be and *is* used to express modern sensibilities. It is not permanently frozen in the past. I would like to demonstrate modernity in Sanskrit by taking a critical look at Satyanarayana's *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham*.[6]

6. Viswanatha Satyanarayana, *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭam* (Bombay: Andhra Mahasabha, 1975). Unfortunately this edition is badly printed with innumerable typographical and grammatical errors. Satyanarayana never wrote his books himself, he dictated them to a scribe, and not being familiar with *nāgarī* script, he did not even proofread this book. Whoever took the responsibility

I have introduced Satyanarayana as a Telugu poet, but with *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham* he enters the world of Sanskrit poets—though hesitantly. Already controversial for his impenetrable style of Telugu writing, Satyanarayana feared that his Telugu critics would attack him now for entering into Sanskrit. He wrote the play in 1950 but left the manuscript unpublished for almost 25 years. His hesitation to publish could also be attributed to his fear that the old style Sanskrit pundits would not receive kindly his revolutionary reworking of the *Mahābhārata* theme as a modern play, however much he protested he was being very devoted to *śāstric* regulations.

For all appearances—*Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham* does looks like a traditional play: it begins with a *nāndi*, followed by a *prastāvanā* where the theme and the author are introduced by the *sūtradhāra*. The *nāyaka* is *dhīralalita*, the *nāyikā* is an *apsarā*, there is even a *vidūṣaka*, and one can say the *aṅgi-rasa* is *śṛṅgāra*. If one would prefer a superficial reading, the play fits the bill of a traditional *nāṭaka*. The author even calls it a *mahā-nāṭaka*. That's where the adherence to tradition stops. But let's give the play a more careful reading.

B. *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham*: A Close Reading

In the very beginning Yayāti enters with a rather striking statement, apparently unrelated to the context, and critically intriguing.

iyaṃ tu vaidikī vṛttiḥ prajârthaṃ vṛṇate janāḥ
strī-pumāṃsau na nirvyāja-rasa-saṅgama-bhāvukau

This is the Vedic way,
people marry to beget children.
Men and women never think of the beauty of
uniting with each other
for no other reason.

Yayāti wonders at his own thought: "Thirsty and looking for water, what am I thinking?"

to print it in *nāgarī* script did not do a careful job. A number of grammatical errors entered the book in addition to typos. Another edition of this work was published in Telugu script in 2007 by the author's son Viswanatha Pavani Sastri with even more typographical and grammatical errors. There is no other author worth the name in recent times that paid so little attention to his work in print.

While they may appear out of context, these words express the central theme of the play. This statement will turn out to be the very basis of the modernity Satyanarayana introduces through this play.

The ritual path of begetting a son when the woman is in season which Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā follow in the *Mahābhārata* story is rejected and the new relationship of *nirvyāja-rasa-saṅgama*, love for no other reason than its own sake, is created in this play. However, we will not know that yet. The play follows the *Mahābhārata* narrative for a while.

Yayāti spots a well but instead of water, he finds Devayānī in it—hanging by the root of a tree. Yayāti wonders who she is: maybe she is the goddess of water who left the sky because she is upset with Varuṇa, the god of water?[7] The king asks her to come out, and she asks for a helping hand. He asks her, "Are you by any chance an *apsarā* thrown out of heaven by an angry Indra?"[8]

"I am not an *apsarā*, I am a human being," she replies. "And you are a noble king comparable to the first lord of people, Prajāpati, and you always have *apsarās* on your mind, don't you?"[9]

Yayāti introduces himself: "I am Yayāti of the moon family, tired from hunting. I lost track of my retinue, and I am thirsty."[10]

"And you came to a delicious source of water," she says, making the first move.[11]

"Don't try make me do what I should not do," he says. "I have never touched another man's woman."[12]

"I am not another man's woman," she asserts. "I know you are king Yayāti. My mind is set on you, and you just took my hand."[13]

The scene moves very fast. Satyanarayana does not waste words telling the story, but carefully leaves suggestions indicating the kind of relationship Devayānī and Yayāti are going to have. Devayānī forces the marriage on Yayāti. It is subtly hinted that Yayāti tries to refuse her because their union will be against dharma; it would be a *viloma* marriage, a Brahmin woman with a Kṣatriya man, not approved by the law. But very soon Śukra, the most powerful of the sages, comes and blesses the marriage and absolves both Yayāti and

7. *varuṇāya kupitayā jalādhi-devatayā bhavitavyam* (Act 1, Scene 1).

8. *kā tvaṃ bhavasi kalyāṇi? bhagavatā maghavatā śaptā kācid apsarāḥ kim?*

9. *aham mānuṣī. nâpsarāḥ. yūyaṃ prajāpati-samā rājarṣayaḥ. nityam apsaro-lagna-cittavṛttayaḥ.*

10. *ahaṃ cāndramaso rājā yayātiḥ. mṛgayā-śrāntas tṛṣârdito virahita-parivāro 'tra samānītaḥ.*

11. *rasa-bharitāṃ vāpīṃ prāptavān.*

12. *akāryaṃ mayā kārayitvā kā tvam? na kadâpi para-yoṣit spṛṣṭā.*

13. *nâham para-yoṣit. tvāṃ jānāmi rājānaṃ yayātim. tvayy ahaṃ lagna-cittā. adya kṛtam tvayā mama pāṇi-grahaṇam.*

Devayānī from the violation of law in entering into such a marriage. Yayāti has no escape.

Soon Śarmiṣṭhā's name is mentioned, and the sound of her name moves something in the depths of Yayāti's heart. He reflects:

trīṇy akṣarāṇi hṛdayaṃ mama śarmiṣṭhêti nibhṛta-nidrāṇam
korakitaṃ mṛdu kusumaṃ jāgarayanti surasa-garbhāṇi.

Three syllables śar-miṣ-ṭhā
delicious in their depth
gently wake up something in me.
The sleeping bud of my heart
is opening into a flower.

Something new begins to happen. The story is taking a path very different from the *Mahābhārata* version. Yayāti feels that his heart, sleeping until now, is opening to a delicious and deep experience unknown to him. This is the clinching indication that the source of love is the heart, and the love needs be awakened in it. The karmic action has its means entirely outside the heart, and is wholly constituted by movements of the body and activities involving agents and instruments outside it, such as chants and oblations. Yogic action, which might be associated with karma, might involve *śravaṇa* (listening), *manana* (contemplation), *nidhidhyāsana* (meditation). The heart does not form part of it, and even its existence is not recognized in karmic and yogic paths. Heart, *hṛdaya*, was frequently used in Sanskrit literature as the source of the appreciation of beauty, artistic or physical. Kāma, the god of erotic love, is well known all over Sanskrit literature to be *manasija*, where *manas* is closer to what we call heart, and even *hṛcchaya*, one who lies in the heart.[14] However, love born in the heart, as a bond between a man and a woman, beyond body, and as an experience that gives a new meaning for life and opens a new path to an ultimate, is entirely new to Sanskrit. That is what Satyanarayana depicts in this play. This makes it necessary for Satyanarayana to invent several plot devices, deviating from the *Mahābhārata* version, even though he preserves the basic story. Following the original storyline, Śukra sends Śarmiṣṭhā along with Devayānī, with an admonition to the king to take care of Śarmiṣṭhā in all other ways but not to call her to bed—exactly as said in the *Mahābhārata* version of the story.

In the opening act, the seeds of love and conflict are planted. Now love takes over; at the beginning of the second act, we see the king thinking:

aśithila-mṛdu-bhāvair mauni-kanyā-sabhogaṃ
spṛśati danuja-kanyā sā muhur mānase mām

14. Thanks to Yigal Bronner for pointing this out to me.

upavana-taru-nīcaiḥ puṣpa-rāśau niṣaṇṇaṃ
kisalayam iva vātândolitaṃ śākhikântam.

I am happy with the sage's daughter.
But the demon's daughter touches my heart
again and again—
like the soft leaf from a branch above,
moved by the breeze,
while I am sitting on a bed of flowers
in my pleasure garden.

Yayāti is not unhappy in his marriage with Devayānī, on the contrary he is perfectly happy in the normal karmic sense of the word. Sitting on a bed of flowers in the pleasure garden signifies physical comfort. The experience Śarmiṣṭhā gives is different. She touches his heart, unlike anyone before. The contrast is significant, between the heart and the body.

Later in the scene, Yayāti, repeating the idea that occurred to him long before he met Śarmiṣṭhā, but now reinforced by having met her, says to his *vidūṣaka*: "From the beginning of creation, a contract between women and men has been established for the purpose of giving birth to children. But now a certain woman has given up that Vedic convention. She does not seek a man and say 'I request you to give me a son.' She becomes shy, with tender feelings in her heart, suffers silently, and her body wilts.'[15] Let us look at this description. This is not the conventional image of a *nāyikā* longing for her lover. This is not the description of *viraha*, depicted in numerous Sanskrit plays. Here Śarmiṣṭhā suffers silently (*manasi khindatī*) and her body wilts (*śarīre parimlānā bhavatī*)—a new image of a woman in love.

Yayāti clearly draws the contrast between Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā: Devayānī is the queen of his life (*prāṇānām adhīśvarī*). Note that he employs the conventional vocabulary repeatedly used in literature describing a wife as *prāṇêśvarī*. But Śarmiṣṭhā transcends his sense of self (*mama jīva-bhāvam atikramya*), and she sits in some world beyond definition (*anirvacanīye loke tiṣṭhatī*). During such times, Yayāti says, he does not feel like he is Yayāti, he feels like he is someone else (*nâhaṃ yayātiḥ, aham anya iva sphurati me*). It is interesting that his minister Bodhāyana, who takes on the role of his *śṛṅgāra-mantrin*, adviser in matters of women, dismisses this description of Śarmiṣṭhā. "That's what everyone thinks," says the minister, quoting a proverb, "The river he bathes in is (as sacred as)

15. *sṛṣṭyāder ṛtu-lagna-buddher jīva-lokasya strī-puruṣa-samayaḥ prajârtham eva vyavasitaḥ. adya kācit kanyā vaidikīṃ vṛttim ajahāt. sā puruṣaṃ gatvā putrârthaṃ tvāṃ prārthayāmīti na vadati. sā sukumāra-bhāva-paraṃparā-parimilita-citta-vṛttir manasi khindati. śarīre parimlānā bhavati.*

Gaṅgā, and the woman he loves is (as beautiful as) Rambhā."[16] The use of a proverb and the quick dismissal by his minister makes it clear that the society does not understand Yayāti.

As the play progresses, continuing a storyline invented by Satyanarayana, we come to know that Śarmiṣṭhā was an *apasarā* named Jyotiṣmatī in her previous birth. She was in love with the Moon, and Indra cursed her to be born as a demon woman. Bharata intervened and requested lenience. Indra decreed that when she reached her twentieth year, she would end her curse and enter the Moon. How was Bharata involved in this? Bodhāyana, the king's confidant, was witness to the story. When he himself was a student of Bharata, he was a classmate of Jyotiṣmatī. She was good at showing all feelings on her face. Gods could not blink their eyes. Jyotiṣmatī was good at this as well. Other *apsarā* women were jealous and told Bharata that she was not a real *apsarā*. This led to her being cursed to be born as a demon woman.

Split personality is a modern literary phenomenon. We will see as the play moves on that Yayāti sees more than one person in himself. Reflecting a split in the hero's self, Satyanarayana even creates a split person in the king's confidant, his alter ego. He is two people with different names in one person: a commander called Vaiśampāyana and a friend called Bodhāyana. They are not twins. Bodhāyana explains how this came to happen. He and Vaiśampāyana were one person, born to the same mother. Yayāti, acting as a surgeon, separated them into two and created two bodies from one. Bodhāyana serves as Yayāti's adviser in matters of love; he calls himself *śṛṅgāra-mantrin*, and Vaiśampāyana serves as the king's army chief. We never see both of them at one time, in any scene, and Vaiśampāyana, who acts superior to his other, does not even approve of Bodhāyana's tricky strategies.

Now Bodhāyana convinces Śarmiṣṭhā that on a certain full-moon day, her curse given by Indra will end and she will enter the Moon. But Śarmiṣṭhā does not want to go to the Moon, she would rather live with Yayāti; since this is impossible, she would remain on earth and live in her thoughts of Yayāti.

Bodhāyana plans things in such a way that Yayāti enters Śarmiṣṭhā's palace on the appointed day. Śarmiṣṭhā is already ill with her longing for Yayāti and her thoughts that she is going to die soon make the illness more severe. The moment Yayāti enters, she thinks he is the Moon himself, or worse, Yama the god of death, and that her end is near. But instead Yayāti announces himself and assures her he is neither Moon, nor Yama.

Śarmiṣṭhā, who has imagined that she was almost at the doorway to her death, recovers on seeing Yayāti. Soon after, they are married in the *gāndharva* manner.

16. This is translation of a Telugu proverb: *tā munigindi ganga, tā valacindi rambha.*

In the eighth act, we see Śukra as he is coming out of Vṛṣaparvan's palace theater, where he has watched a play. (Apparently the play is based on the theme of the love between Yayāti and Śarmiṣṭhā, but we are not told who the author/producer of the play is; as is hinted later, the producer of the play is Bharata himself). Śukra is deeply impressed by the effect the play has had on him. For the first time he realizes that this is a new experience, an aesthetic experience, comparable only to the experience of the ultimate, *brahmānanda.*

trayī-vīthyām uktaṃ yama-niyama-mārgeṇa hṛdaya-
sphurad-vahnau taptvā śiva-maya-mahaś cāpyam iti yat
kathā-prāptauddātya-pravahaṇa-samāropita-manaḥ
prakṛṣṭe ca sthāyiny api bhavati hārdaṃ śiva-mayam

The light of the eternal
is attained by consuming oneself in the fire
ignited inside the heart
by control and discipline—as directed in the Three Texts.
The same light of the ultimate
is felt in the heart
from the intensity of emotion
arising out of an elevated story
creating a mindfulness immersing
everything in itself.

And moreover, this experience is felt by ordinary people living their life in this world of desires, hopes, failures and sadness in all its perplexity. Later, Śukra explains further in his conversation with his student, Maheśāna:

You know Śarmiṣṭhā, the girl who was made to serve my daughter. My son-in-law had his mind totally immersed in the thoughts of her, kept thinking of her all the time and lost himself in them. At that time the king felt a strange experience in his own self. He related that experience to Bharata. That was very helpful to the great author of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* in developing his rasa theory.

He continues, this time in verse:

manasi viharamāṇān suṣṭhu saṅgṛhya bhāvān
muni-gata-hṛdaye sve sañcinoty ātta-tejāḥ
hṛdaya-kuhara-magnāḥ saṃskṛtīr unnamayya
prakaṭayati kavīndro mānase sphūrjatīs tāḥ

The yogi, who holds light,
gathers the various feelings playing out in his mind
and collects them in his silent heart.

And the poet brings out
the latent thoughts hidden in the heart
and gives expression to them
brilliantly through his mind.

The strange experience felt by Yayāti is further explained in the ninth act. This experience becomes clear to Yayāti when Śukra's student Maheśāna, a rather spicy and sharp fellow, comes to the king to deliver a message from Śukra to Devayānī. Yayāti happens to be in his forest resort, away from his palace. Maheśāna goes there and, finding no guard at the gate, goes forward and stands in the presence of the king. The king looks at him and, amused at his no-nonsense manner, tells him that this resort is beyond limits to others. Maheśāna quickly retorts: "I am not another, I am myself." This retort triggers a certain clarity in Yayāti's mind.

As explained by the king's confidant (who appears as Vaiśampāyana) in the ninth act, this is how it has gone in Yayāti's mind: When the king feels "I am me" he is one person. When he says "I am Yayāti", he is another person. The king loves Śarmiṣṭhā. The king kept thinking of her but was also afraid of thinking of her because of Śukra's prohibition. Lost in such thoughts, he got totally immersed in them. During such times he felt he was seeing within himself a third person, other than his two selves. He told this to sage Bharata, and Bharata declared that *rasa* happens in the spectator's mind.[17]

Satyanarayana explains this cryptic statement a little more in his preface. In the earlier stages of his writing the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, sage Bharata himself did not have a clear idea as to where rasa experience happens: In the mind of the author of the play? In the person of the character? In the actor who plays the role? Or, does it happen in the spectator? According to Satyanarayana, when sage Bharata was told of the experience of a third person in Yayāti's mind, he concluded that the *rasa* experience happens in the person who watches the play (*sāmājika*).

There are two new ideas that are introduced here quietly in the name of Bharata. We know that Bharata does not discuss in his *Nāṭya-śāstra* the question of where the *rasa* experience takes place. That is famously discussed by Abhinavagupta and through him we know that the question engaged the attention of earlier scholars: Śaṅkuka, Lollaṭa, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka. The two ideas

17. *aham aham iti puruṣaḥ prathamaḥ. yayātir dvitīyaḥ. yathā tvaṃ câhaṃ ca. danuja-sutā-saṅgamo niṣiddho bhagavatā. śarmiṣṭhā rāja-gata-buddhiḥ. rājā tāṃ cintayann âste. punas tāṃ na cintayet. tasyā anubhavâdīn cintayan rājā paravaśo babhūva. tasmin paravaśībhūte samaye kañcit tṛtīyaṃ puruṣaṃ rājā svasmin dadarśa. bharata-muner nyavedayat. rasaḥ sāmājika-niṣṭha iti bharata-munir nirṇayaṃ cakāra.*

Satyanarayana introduces are both new: 1) The subjective experience of the person in love (here Yayāti) is itself aesthetic. 2) He experiences this as someone other than his personal and social self, that is, as an aesthetic self. Furthermore, the experience of *rasa*, says Satyanarayana, is neither *karma* (ritual action) nor *jñāna* (knowledge). It is in between them, somewhere in the middle. Śukra explains this further to his student:

> For those who travel by *devayāna*, the path of gods, to reach higher worlds, the wife is a component of action, *karmāṅga*, to produce a son. This is a time-honored convention. Now Yayāti has created a new path: *rasayāna*, the path of beauty, a path so similar to *devayāna* that he calls it its *sabrahmacārin* (class-fellow).

As for the rest of the narrative, Satyanarayana comes back to the main storyline of the *Mahābhārata* with a few minor, but significant, changes. Devayānī discovers that Śarmiṣṭhā had three sons by Yayāti. She becomes furious that her husband had violated her father's command, though she loves the cute boy Puru, and runs to her father to complain. Śukra promptly curses Yayāti to become prematurely old. Devayānī realizes that her father's curse actually punishes her as much as Yayāti, but reconciles herself to living with an old husband. In the meantime Yayāti gets a reprieve by exchanging his old age for his son Puru's youth, but he is not too happy to leave his son in that condition. He goes to Śukra to express his unhappiness. Meanwhile Śarmiṣṭhā, who has gone to heaven by now, entreats Indra, who intervenes and brings Puru back to youth. In the end everyone is happy, and Puru is installed on the throne, as the king of his father Yayāti's kingdom and Devayānī's father Vṛṣaparvan's as well. The play ends like any other traditional Sanskrit play, with a *bharata-vākya*.

C. Modernity in *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham*

Concepts such as *alaṅkāra, rasa, aucitya, dhvani*, and so on, as variously interpreted by theorists of the past, reflect their general assumption that literature does not change with time; it is timeless. Literary experience, *rasâsvādana*, can therefore be changeless as well. The same literary theory that works for fourth-century Kālidāsa also works for fourteenth-century Śākalyamalla. Good poetry is the same in any period. This is what Satyanarayana revises in his play. He has created a new aesthetic experience, unknown to Sanskrit poetry until now, but he does this under the cover of tradition, using Bharata's name and Śukra's approval.

You can see that Satyanarayana uses the same terms as the traditional *ālaṅkārika*s, but creates an entirely new concept, nowhere found in Sanskrit

ālaṅkārika literature. *Rasânanda* is considered in *alaṅkāra* texts as an experience that has *alaukika* (other-worldly) characteristics and is spoken of as a classmate (*sabrahmacārin*) of *brahmânanda*. But it is never seen as an experience that can lead the *sahṛdaya* to the eternal *brahman*. According to *alaṅkāra* texts, *rasa* experience belongs to this world, and is realized only during the short time when the *sahṛdaya* listens to a *kāvya* or watches a play. It may have some resemblance to *brahmânanda*, but it is not truly similar to it.[18] In effect, Satyanarayana is creating a new philosophy of love in this play. It is not *prema* as it is known to Sanskrit literature.

This is the central point of the play. Yayāti, in association with Śarmiṣṭhā, created love in this world. There was no love in the world before they created it, only karmic action. It is necessary that this relationship be chosen freely by a man and woman, outside social conventions, a secret known only to them. It is only then that this love attains its highest realization. Yayāti experiences love for Śarmiṣṭha neither as his personal nor as his social self. When he realizes his love for Śarmiṣṭhā, he does so as a third person in himself. It is only in this condition that he is free from both his personal and social restraints. In his freedom he finds a space that can only be called aesthetic space.

Love can be free only when it violates social conventions and as long as it remains secret. Once it is revealed, it becomes a crime, gets its socially deserved punishment, gets contaminated by mundane realities, and loses its nascent purity. Yayāti becomes prematurely old for violating Śukra's orders, but his love for Śarmiṣṭhā lives, and Śarmiṣṭhā herself lives. She remains an eternal symbol of love. That's why the name of the play is *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham, "Śarmiṣṭhā who lives forever."* In effect love lives for human beings to find the path to the ultimate.

Love in Satyanarayana's play is not *śṛṅgāra*, known to the *alaṅkāra-śāstra*. There are no routine descriptions of eroticism in the relationship between Yayāti and Śarmiṣṭhā, none of the usual *sañcāribhāvas*, or descriptions of the physical details of Śarmiṣṭhā's body from head to foot. Her separation from Yayāti does not require the prescribed blaming of the moon or a series of cooling services of lotus leaves and sandal paste. The hero does not go to the garden to forget his pain from the absence of the beloved, only to be yet more painfully reminded of her by the blooming trees and buzzing bees. Neither does the hero try to paint her picture only to see that tears from his eyes blur the painting even before it is finished (as for instance, Yayāti does in Pratāparudra's late-thirteenth-century Sanskrit play, *Yayāti-caritra*).

18. A number of references may be given to discussions of this well-known distinction. For a very detailed treatment, see Masson and Patwardhan 1969, 161–64.

Satyanarayana believes that the modern period beginning from the nineteenth century destroyed human essence and created monstrous mechanical structures that deprive the human being of a chance to belong. He does not—like the modernists—break with the past or declare war on tradition. Instead he declares war on colonial modernity. All his life he fought against the modernity brought by colonial imposition, which most of his contemporaries passionately adhered to because they believed it led to progress. His contemporaries did not see Satyanarayana's mission and dubbed him anti-modern and traditional.

He creates in this play a new myth, a myth of the birth of love, locating it in ancient time. This is not a traditional mythological play; it is a modern "mythic" play. The myth he creates for humanity is love, not *kāma*, or *moha*—both of which had already been written about in Sanskrit *kāvya* over and over. Neither is this *bhakti*, which moved *śṛṅgāra* to a world beyond the human. What Satyanarayana created is love, which is totally human and worldly, and which at the same time makes the human being realize the eternal. This gives to the human world a sense of fullness, realization, and meaning, which are mercilessly robbed by a soulless world. It brings back to the human beings a sense of beauty and joy removed from them by a senseless drive to power and wealth.

However, Satyanarayana insists that he wrote this play right along the lines of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. He clearly declares in his preface: *pūrva-mahā-bhāratīya-kavi-patham anusarāmi sma. bhāratīya-mahā-nāṭaka-svarūpaṃ mama hṛdaye yādṛśaṃ gocaritaṃ tādṛśam eva mayā nirmitam iti. bhāvanā-dārḍhyena pracalito 'ham.* (I followed the path shown by the great Indian poets. I followed the way I saw in my heart the form of the great Indian play. I was guided by the strength of my imagination). The key word here is imagination. The conviction that Satyanarayana feels, and has stated so strongly in his preface to the play, needs to be unpacked to see how his imagination creates a modernity on the foundation of tradition. In a way, Satyanarayana is responding to the Bhāvakavis' view that all love in traditional poetry is physical, carnal, and lacking any human touch.

D. Minor Characters in the Play

To see Satyanarayana's modernity more clearly, we need to see the characters he created. They are crafted to represent distinct individuals and not types as in many traditional Sanskrit plays, especially the later ones. I will begin with his minor characters first, who seem like cardboard cutouts in so many traditional plays. Let us see how Śukra's disciple Maheśāna is presented. The young man means business and does not mince words. His quick-witted, no-nonsense

manner comes through in sharp one-line sentences and quick observations. When Bodhāyana asks for his name, and remarks that Maheśāna is a great name (*mahannāma*), the disciple asks for Bodhāyana's name and returns the sarcasm, saying his is a greater name (*mahattaraṃ nāma*). He refuses to call Devayānī by her title *Mahādevī* despite being corrected by minister Bodhāyana. He insists on calling Devayānī by the name he is used to as a friend. When Maheśāna is ready to go, Yayāti tries to stop him, describing Devayānī in a beautiful verse:

karpūra-guggulu-navâguru-nārikela-
naivedya-dhūpa-mukha-sādhu-parīmala-śrīr
āyāti rāyāti mañjutara-kuñja-latānta-cūḍā
sañcāriṇī para-parīmala-mārga-jiṣṇuḥ

She comes
this minute
her face smelling sweet
with camphor, aloe, incense, coconut,
and the flavor of offerings,
her hair adorned with
flowers from the blooming bushes,
conquering all other fragrances on the way.

The disciple loves the description. He pays his compliments to the king: "You see beauty and speak beautifully too. You surely *are* a king (*tvaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ paśyasi, ramaṇīyataraṃ vadasi, tvaṃ niścayaṃ mahārājaḥ*). I will wait until she returns." On seeing Devayānī, bedecked as queen, he does not recognize her in her new attire, and asks: "Are you Devayānī? I see you only by your voice. What kind of guise is this?" When Devayānī answers, "Your friend is now the queen, you know!" Maheśāna quickly retorts: "So the yoga-stick has sprouted, put out leaves, and is now in bloom! (*tapo-daṇḍaḥ patritaḥ, kisalitaḥ, puṣpitaś ca*). Well, I have seen you, I am leaving!"

Speaking in short and well-crafted sentences, Maheśāna's character is complete and well-rounded. He comes through as a living person with a life of his own, and unmistakably independent.

Another minor character who makes the reader take note is the young boy Puru. He is completely confused when he sees his father, whom he knows as Candra, is no other than Yayāti the king. He speaks in total dismay. His child-like words are truly amusing. "How is that again?" the boy says, trying to figure out the puzzle. "My father is Candra. Candra is Yayāti. Yayāti is king. Then, my father is Yayāti, Yayāti is king, my father is king!"

On a larger and more significant level, the character of Devayānī is very carefully constructed with a view to make her represent the path to the ultimate,

devayāna. The similarity between her name and the path is carefully suggested[19] by her attention to ritual in her daily life. In a very critical moment in the play, we see Yayāti get passionate about her. He suggestively describes the sky:

śakalita-sita-megha-srota-sopāna-paṅktau
upahita-mṛdu-kānteḥ svinna-kalhāra-bandhoḥ
śabala-kiraṇa-varṇair vyāpṛtaṃ vyoma-sīma
naṭad-udita-mayūrī-piñcha-sāmyaṃ bibharti

The moon, the friend of the wet water lilies
shines through the layers of white clouds
and colors them with multiple soft hues.
The sky looks like a peacock
with its tail spread out,
ready to dance.

Devayānī gets the hint, but busily involved in the ritual she has undertaken, she directs her maid to tell the king that her mistress is preoccupied with her duties of worship, and begs forgiveness. The king responds by saying that he is aware of the queen's lifestyle of constant dedication to rites (*nitya-vrata-śīlā*). He even praises her rites. It is because such rites are properly performed by disciplined people that the sky and the earth are united in harmony. The clouds, fully satisfied, give rain to the earth and the earth gives us crops. The subtle erotic suggestion hidden in the image of the earth and the sky, the rain and the crops, is lost on her. Yayāti doesn't give up. He presses on, this time more openly:

phaṇi-pati-phaṇa-ratna-cchāyam aṣṭāpadôdyan-
maṇigaṇa-nikarâṃśu-vyaktam utsarga-ramyaṃ
smarati ca mama devyāḥ pāṇim adyāpi cittaṃ
tuhina-śakala-ramyaṃ pallavaṃ vā gṛhītyām.

Even now,
my mind sees the time I held
my queen's hand,
lovely as a snow flake,
and soft as a leaf bud,
with the colors of the precious stones
from the hood of the first snake
set in gold.

It does not work. The queen admonishes him that he speaks to her with the intent of ruining her rite by diverting her mind (*tathā vadasi yathā mama mano*

19. I thank Yigal Bronner for pointing out this similarity to me.

vrata-niyama-sraṃsi bhavati). The king quickly apologizes: "I am not forcing you, I am no destroyer of rites (*vrata-bhaṅga-kārī*). Please do as you wish." The queen leaves promising to come back after concluding the rite.

The situation where Śukra's disciple Maheśāna comes with a message for Devayānī, which I discussed earlier, is worth revisiting. The description the king gives of Devayānī in that context suggests two different meanings. The words in the poem are captivating, their sounds flowing smoothly to create a harmony of fragrances, caressing the senses in the third line with its repetition of /ñj/, and confident in its closure declaring the conquering quality of Devayānī, who doesn't let any other fragrances survive around her. But the meaning of the words is not all that pleasing to a man in love. Her face smells like an altar with its offerings and incense and her hair is tucked with wild flowers. It is clearly an admirable description to the ears of Maheśāna, who grew up in a hermitage, but there is a little sarcasm in the king's tone, too obvious to the reader/listener to be overlooked. Devayānī is too religious to be interested in love, and on top of that she would not suffer a rival who acts differently. Very soon we will have further evidence of this nature of Devayānī's. She leaves as soon as she receives the message from Maheśāna—or rather from the king, speaking through Maheśāna—that Śukra is planning to conduct a ritual to ward off an obstacle in Devayānī's life, and Devayānī should be in attendance. She asks the king to come too, but he has other things to do; he has plans to visit the abode of Indra and the world of the moon. Devayānī quickly decides to leave the very next day, orders the minister to have a chariot ready for her, and excuses herself because she has to attend to an unfinished part of her ritual. The king says in a tone of mild sarcasm: "Go, gods' work should not be left unfinished (*deva-kāryaṃ nâvaśeṣitavyam*)."

In contrast, Śarmiṣṭhā is never willful, demanding or dominating. In her first appearance in the play, she admits her disrespect towards Devayānī and begs for forgiveness (*mām avinayaṃ kṣamasva*). Throughout the play she is totally in love with Yayāti. Seeing Yayāti for the first time, she feels a thrill deep in her heart, never known before (*ananubhūta-pūrvo vikāraḥ*). Strictly speaking, she is a demon, being the daughter of a demon king Vṛṣaparvan. When Yayāti tells Bodhāyana, his adviser in matters of love, the latter quips: "Great! Kill the demons but love their girls" (*surārīn jayasi, surāri-kanyāṃ vāñchasi*). Yayāti admonishes him saying, "You idiot, she may be the servant of the queen, but she is as beautiful as the queen herself; a demon only in name, in form and everything she is human." Later in the play, as we have seen, Satyanarayana creates a whole new biography for her, and we see Śarmiṣṭhā as an *apsarā* throughout. In Satyanarayana's depiction, Śarmiṣṭhā seems dreamlike. Of all the characters in the play, she is the only one who is unreal, a personification of a heavenly feeling, beyond thought and touch. She belongs to a mythic world.

The mythic time is dramatically revealed to us when Yayāti describes Śukra, invoking his presence in the following verses towards the end of the play:

tvāṃ vā bhṛgoś ca tanayaṃ kathayanti kecit
kecit vidher uta mahaḥ pavanâgni-pakvam
tvat-tejasā gagana-maṇḍala-śekhareṇa
ratnīkṛto dhruva-padôpari viṣṇu-pādaḥ

Some see you as the son of sage Bhṛgu.
And some say you are the son of Brahma, the creator.
And yet others think you are the light ripened from Wind and Fire.
You make the feet of Viṣṇu above the world of Dhruva
shine like a resplendent jewel.

And then again:

manvantarâtyaya-vivṛddha-payodhi-bhaṅgaiḥ
pīteṣu dikpati-pureṣv api satrilokam
tvaṃ ca prabho suraguruś ca mahā-varāha-
daṃṣṭrâgra-lagna-maṇi-yugmam ivôjjvalau staḥ

In the space between the eons of Manu
when the oceans rise up in one huge tide
and swallow the three worlds
and the cities of the lords of the directions,
you, Lord, and the Teacher of Gods
shine like two jewels on the tusks
of the Great Boar.

Satyanarayana's style blends dazzling mythic images such as this with the sensibilities of modern humor. He makes his Sanskrit read like a seamless continuum of classical thought and contemporary idiom. For instance, relatively minor characters such as the minister Bodhāyana, the female attendant Jaghanavalkalā, and Śukra's disciple Maheśāna, all of whom speak Sanskrit—no Prakrit is used in this play—sound as if they are speaking a modern-day colloquial south Indian language. Lexically and syntactically it is good Sanskrit, but the idiom and tone are completely modern. For example, Bodhāyana, seeing an aging Jaghanavalkalā with the part in her hair turning grey, jokes with her: *te sīmanta-pathe muktā-kāntir ābhāti. kaścid bandhor maraṇāt prāptaṃ vā mṛtanaṣṭam? dhanavatîva dṛśyase* (The part in your hair looks like it has pearls decorating it. Did a relative die and leave you a big inheritance? You look rich). *Mudanaṣṭam*, derived from *mṛtanaṣṭam*, is colloquial Telugu for a windfall inherited when a distant relative dies, and this joke is a direct translation from Telugu.

Bodhāyana goes on to compare the white hair in her part to buttermilk that flows through the stem of a banana-leaf plate at the end of dinner (*jaraṭha-kadalī-patra-bhojana-pātre takram iva sraṃsate sita-kāntis tava sīmanta-pathe*), which relates to the south Indian convention of eating out of banana leaf-plates, and having buttermilk as the last course. Sanskritists would agree that Satyanarayana brings local idiom into Sanskrit without making it look hybrid.

E. Sanskrit Drama in Performance

There is an oft-quoted verse of unknown origin:

kāvyeṣu nāṭakaṃ ramyaṃ
nāṭakeṣu śakuntalā
tatrâpi ca caturtho 'ṅkas
tatra śloka-catuṣṭayam

The play is the most beautiful of all poetry
and among plays, Śakuntalā.
In that, the fourth act is the best,
and four verses in it, especially.

This saying perhaps indicates, along with the high status of drama among Sanskrit literary genres, the decline of performance as well. The fact that it isolates four *śloka*s, out of context, for special mention suggests that the play is being read more than it is performed, and is remembered for the craftsmanship of individual verses rather than for its performance as a whole. In our living memory no one talks of great Sanskrit actors or actresses, drama troupes, or producers. Historical evidence of an active Sanskrit theatre is tantalizing. Actors and dancers are mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*nārājake janapade prahṛṣṭa-naṭa-nartakāḥ*), and the *Nāṭya-śāstra* itself is a goldmine of knowledge about training of actors, rules for acting, the role of the director, and so on. Excavated sites where theater flourished speak silently of the active production of plays. The plays-within-a-play in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita* and Kṣemīśvara's *Naiṣadhānanda* provide some textual evidence, for such imaginary theatrical activity could not occur without some memory of such events in reality. The most prominent evidence of active Sanskrit theater comes from Kerala, where Kudiyattam theater has been producing Sanskrit plays for at least ten centuries.

In the late nineteenth century, Ananda Gajapati, the Maharaja of Vizianagaram, supported a theater company called Jagannātha Vilāsinī Sabha, which

produced Sanskrit plays. No information is available about the plays this theater company produced, but one interesting fact is that in 1892, when this company undertook the production of Gurajada Apparao's modern Telugu play *Kanyāśulkam*, which is so modern that it did not include the *nāndī* and *prastāvanā*, this company had a *prastāvanā* written for it in Sanskrit. This incident, long forgotten, suggests that the traditions of Sanskrit theater were strongly rooted in the minds of the producers. Sanskrit theater in Andhra did not live long after the death of the Maharaja, except for an occasional amateurish attempt by students of Oriental colleges, that is, institutions established by the British government to help traditional scholarship continue—where an act or two from Kālidāsa or Bhavabhūti were played.

Satyanarayana was not involved in producing Sanskrit plays, but he was actively interested in Telugu theater, where his teacher Chellapilla Venkata Sastri, who was himself a master playwright, was a path-breaker. Satyanarayana personally saw the success Venkata Sastri's *Pāṇḍavôdyoga-vijayamulu* enjoyed when it was played to packed houses for decades in Andhra Pradesh. This play, based on the popular *Mahābhārata* theme of the Pāṇḍavas preparing for battle and their final victory over the Kauravas, included a large number of verses. Even illiterate villagers memorized these verses and sang them, going to fields on their bullock carts. Apparently inspired by his guru, but unmistakably following his own style, Satyanarayana wrote several plays in Telugu specifically to be performed on stage. His students at S. R. R. and C.V. R. College at Vijayawada enjoyed presenting his plays, some of which were written at their request. He was fully acquainted with the techniques of modern theater production. We do not know for sure, but it is possible he wanted *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham* to be produced. It is one of the ironies of modern literary history that he had to leave the script unattended for almost twenty-five years. While it is unfortunate that the play was never produced, the stage-worthiness of the text could still be noted.

Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham is short in length and can be produced without any cuts in about two hours. Its ten acts are all short, and the pace of the story is fast. The conversations are simple and, as I have already observed, fairly intelligible to an educated Telugu audience—demonstrating that Sanskrit is not just for pundits. The verses are heavy, but the Telugu audience during the first half of the twentieth century was very comfortable with long compounds in verses in plays. Telugu plays popular during that period included verses, very much in the same way Sanskrit plays did. Many such plays were based on Purāṇic themes, with an elevated style for conversations between gods and demons. The audience did not understand the heavy-duty Sanskrit of the long compounds, but their very unintelligibility created an aura of grandeur. Satyanarayana's verses in

Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham would not have been any more distant and unintelligible than such verses in the Telugu plays of the time.

Another indication that Satyanarayana wanted the play to be successful on stage is the care he took to include dramatic moments that could be visually arresting, such as the dazzling appearance of Śukra in the first act.

Satyanarayana was a good singer, and had an excellent sense of sound and music. He sang his own poems, especially his *Kinnĕra-sāni pāṭalu* (written about a river called Kinnerasani, a tributary of the river Krishna), and his audience sat riveted to their seats. His sense of appropriate rhythm can be seen in his use of a meter unusual for Sanskrit drama in two instances at the beginning of the sixth act—once when the *apsarā* women sing in the background announcing King Yayāti's arrival in Heaven, and a second time, when he enters Śarmiṣṭhā's abode. The rhythmic songs introduced here indicate the change of mood in the play, from sad to joyous, from anxious to festive. The story takes a dramatic turn from now on; Yayāti marries Śarmiṣṭhā. The festive beat of the drums often heard in *Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Odissi*, and other dance forms, and in folk performances all over India, but not employed in Sanskrit drama, gives *Amṛta-śarmiṣṭham* a certain earthy flavor. I give below the two rhymes Satyanarayana creates here, without attempting translations, since the sound patterns speak (or sing) for themselves.

takathoṃ vihāya takathoṃ vīro rājā yayātir amara-purīm
takathoṃ sva-puraṃ gacchati sura-taru-kusuma-parimalita-śirāḥ

and later:

kiṭa-kiṭa-kiṭa-kiṭa svinna-kalhāra-bandhoḥ
kulapati-caya-maliḥ prāpa saudhaṃ priyāyāḥ
thakiṭa-thakiṭa toṃ-toṃ-toṃ navânanda-bhūmir
bhavatu bharata-mauner yaḥ kṛpā-pātram āsīt

In this context, the *prastāvanā* in the opening of the play acquires a more interesting meaning than what conventional requirements signify. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* includes *prastāvanā* as part of the *pūrvaraṅga* requirements; one type of *prastāvanā* is one that is composed by the author of the play (*kavi-kṛta*). Satyanarayana creatively violates the rules of *prastāvanā* to make the production interesting to a modern audience. For instance, the two characters that appear in the *prastāvanā* are the young *sūtradhāra* and his old stepmother, instead of the *sūtradhāra* and *naṭī*, his wife. The producer enters to inform the audience that there has been a problem in his family: his stepmother is angry and is leaving his father. She is the one who has trained him and his troupe, and he wonders how they can please the audience without her help. He talks about his stepmother's

high opinion of the play and its author Satyanarayana; and just as he concludes, she appears on the stage and is persuaded to stay, and the play begins. This, indeed, is a very interesting way of introducing a play that involves a hero and his problems with two women. The *prastāvanā* is classical in form, and yet modern because it includes a woman and her stepson in place of a *naṭī* and her husband—and furthermore, the stepmother trained the actors, but all the introductory words are spoken by the son, thus splitting between them the job done by one man, the *sūtradhāra*, in traditional plays. At the end, it is the mother who sings the opening song, a job assigned to the *naṭī* in traditional plays.

In the *prastāvanā*, Satyanarayana stands out with his very traditional voice, in the director's words, which express the opinion of his stepmother:

mṛt spṛṣṭvā kanakam karoti sa iti vyācakṣate bhāvukāḥ
āndhryāṃ vāci rasa-dhvani-prakaṭiteṣv adhvaṣv anekeṣv aṭan
so'śīti-prakaṭās samā vidhi-pādāṅka-lākṣā sphuran-
netrâṃśuś caratîndha-netara-mahān vahnir manuṣyâkṛtiḥ

He touches a lump of clay and turns it into gold—
that's what people who know what a poem is
say about him.
In the world of Telugu language,
he travelled many a path of
elevated mood and meaning.
His eyes are set on the feet of the goddess of words,
decorated with lac.
For eighty great years[20] he has walked the earth,
in human form:
the first fire that needs no fuel.

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20. He must have written the *prastāvanā* in 1975, when he turned eighty, while the play was written much earlier.

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25

A Distant Mirror

Innovation and Change in the East Javanese Kakawin

Thomas M. Hunter

A. Introduction

If the development of the poetics of the *kakawin* during the Early Mataram period (ca. 732–928 CE) represents a point at which *kāvya* sparked a revolution in the expressive capacities of ancient Java, the history of the *kakawin* after the shift of political power to East Java in the mid-tenth century brought with it further changes and innovations that are, if anything, more remarkable still. These changes ensured a special place in literary history for the "Kawi classics" of East Java (ca. 1035–1478 CE) and left a lasting impression on the Balinese tradition of *kakawin* composition, which remained an active part of the literary life of court and cloister well into the nineteenth century.[1]

In contrast to the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* (OJR), an anonymous work which I have claimed was the product of a school of poetic

1. I use "cloister" here figuratively to refer to the *brahamaṇa* households called *geriya* in Bali. It is not completely accurate to say that the literary life of Bali was largely conducted within courtly priestly households, although these may have been the predominant contexts that produced the Balinese *kakawin*. See Rubenstein 2000, 72–125 for a detailed description of *kakawin* composition and preservation by priestly lineages, Creese 1991 for a discussion of the Balinese *kakawin* that suggests some were composed by commoners. From the evidence of Verses 130–38 of *Geguritan Brayut* we know that the recitation of the standard classics of all three major genres of Balinese literature (*kakawin, kidung*, and *geguritan*) was a part of the cultural life of commoner families. These verses provide a telling counter example to claims for the complete dominance of Balinese literary life by courtly and priestly households.

practice deeply involved in developing a literary dialect and poetics capable of expressing the religious and political ideals of an emerging polity, the *kakawin* of East Java are frequently associated with the life histories of particular authors. These were literary stylists who enjoyed royal patronage of the sort that was common in South Asia throughout the history of the *kāvya*, and who at times spoke in intimate detail of their successes and failures in gaining the favorable attention of their patrons. Yet this later period of vigorous activity in *kakawin* composition does not grow out of an unbroken tradition linking the OJR with East Javanese *kakawin* like the *Arjunawiwāha* (composed ca. 1035 CE). Instead it is preceded by a period of at least 100 years when prose translations of the Indian epics took center stage in courtly arenas of literary activity.

We know from the internal evidence of at least one of the Old Javanese works in *Parwa* form that during the tenth century CE there was a conscious turning away from the aesthetic norms of the Early Mataram, and a rejection of the techniques of "indirect expression" (*vakrokti*) that share equal pride of place in *kāvya* and *kakawin*. This cannot mean that the study and production of metrical verses in *kakawin* form died out during this period, for the first *kakawin* produced in East Java clearly reflects a continuing history of experimentation and development. One task of this chapter will thus be to demonstrate how the shifting fortunes of prose and metrical forms of composition in the two centuries following the transfer of the political center from Central to East Java (ca. 928 CE) reveals an energetic project of royal patronage that supported a variety of modes of literary expression.

The work in this chapter is also aimed at opening up a discussion of the further development of *alaṃkāra* [figural expression] in the *kakawin*, both with a view to illuminating the growth of an indigenous aesthetic that had profound consequences far beyond the historical limits of ancient Javanese culture, and to begin to trace the degree to which this aesthetic reflected developments on the Indian subcontinent. As we shall see, the latter task is by no means simple, and it may be possible here only to establish the basis of further studies that must await the attention of the next generation of scholars.

B. Not *Vakrokti*

As Supomo (1972, 1996) has noted in several thoughtful studies, the period from October 14 through November 12 in the year 996 CE marks a watershed in the history of Old Javanese (OJ) letters. This is the date of a reading of the OJ *Wirāṭaparwa* at the court of Dharmawangśa Tĕguh (ca. 990–1006 CE), an important figure in the rise of the East Javanese polity and a generous patron of

the literary arts.[2] This reading, described internally in the text (Wir 98.2–14), is important not only because it demonstrates the central role played by literature in the conduct of statecraft in ancient East Java, but because it places in direct opposition the prose style of the OJ Parwa literature with the poetic style prominent in the Śivagṛha inscription of 856 CE and the OJ *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* (KR).

The *Wirāṭaparwa* (Wir) begins with a section detailing the intention of Dharmawangśa to join in "the auspicious process of giving a Javanese form to the work of Wyāsa" with the aim of "founding a lineage of poets of energetic spirit that will be renowned far into the future."[3] The narrative then shifts to a text-internal perspective. Here the mythical sage Waiśampāyana stands in for the Javanese author(s) of the *Wirāṭaparwa*, while King Janamejaya speaks from what must certainly have been Dharmawangśa's perspective. What is most striking here is that through the medium of this literary device, Dharmawangśa is portrayed as showing a marked preference for a prose rendition of the *Mahābhārata* (Mbh) materials, a conversion from the metrical form of the Sanskrit originals to a form that will relate "the essentials of the tale according to fact [...] without adding ornamentation or imaginative renderings."[4] In keeping with this aim he is described as enjoining the composer(s) of the *Wirāṭaparwa* to "shun the diversion of the play of poetic invention."[5]

2. At this writing I have been unable to locate any inscriptions that can definitely be linked with Dharmawangśa Tĕguh. The Pĕlĕm inscription of 893 Śaka (971 CE) was issued by Śrī Mahārāja rake hino Śrī Iśana Wikrama dyaḥ Mattāngadewa, from which it seems clear that he was a predecessor of Dharmawangśa Tĕguh. If Dharmawangśa Tĕguh was reigning in 996 CE (as we know from the *Wirāṭaparwa*), then it may be that he was also reigning in 991 CE, the date of issue of the Sĕndang Kamal inscription. The line containing the name of the ruling king at the time of that inscription (following the phrase *pāduka Śrī mahārāja* of line 3) is unfortunately illegible, but the name of the highly placed dignitary issuing the inscription—Pu Dharmma-sa(ng)grāma-wikrānta—is suggestive, perhaps indicating a dynastic preference for names containing the element *dharma*, or perhaps illustrating a relationship with the Śailendra dynasty like that sketched by Jordaan (2006) for the later Sanggramawijaya, an important figure in the inscriptions of Airlangga.

3. *umilwa manggala ning mangjawākĕn Byāsamata [...] tĕwĕka sang kawi n utsāhabuddhi mwang parampara karĕngö tĕkeng anāgatakāla*

All translations in this chapter are the work of the author, unless otherwise indicated. For the sake of consistency I have retained spellings with –w- that have been used for many years among scholars of Old Javanese in place of the transliteration –v- that is found in works on the South Asian tradition. For the sake of readability I have taken the liberty of using –ng- for transliteration of the velar nasal of Sanskrit, except when transliterating from Sanskrit, in which case I retain the usual diacritic form -ṅ-.

4. *yathābhūta tattwa kathānâtah [...] tan bhūṣaṇāna buddhiracana*

5. *haywenupāśryan dṛṣṭānta kawi-līlā-lālana*

The crucial point is then delivered by Waiśampāyana, who assures his royal patron that he will avoid "wordiness" and the "figural" style of composition:

> As you command, your highness. Have no fear, for I will relate the tale honestly, following it step by step, not allowing it to be affected by figural speech (*vakrokti*) or wordiness (*wākya-wistāra*).[6]

From a historical perspective this is quite remarkable, for it represents a complete reorientation of literary preferences between the Early Mataram (ca. 732–928 CE) and the era of Dharmawangśa, ruling some 70 years after the political shift to the Brantas river valley of East Java begun during the reign of Mpu Siṇḍok (reigned 929–946 CE). The contrast to the situation in 856 CE cannot be more marked: in the earlier period we find that everything central to figural speech is marshaled together in the service of a literary architectonics easily comparable to the reliefs and architecture of the great temple complexes of Central Java. In the latter period we find the ruler of a prominent and expansionist polity in East Java rejecting the whole notion of figural speech in favor of a chaste rendition of events in prose form. One thing is certain: this declaration of a preference for a prose style defined in negative terms as "not *vakrokti*" clearly represents a shift in paradigm that cannot have occurred in a historical vacuum.

We know that during his reign Dharmawangśa Tĕguh faced serious challenges to his authority, indeed to the very existence of the state. This was a period when the prosperity and political influence of East Java were on the rise, partly due to the skilful use of the tax-transfer system to encourage the opening up of productive agricultural lands and localized centers of craft production in the Brantas river basin and partly to a growing Javanese presence in the maritime routes linking the sea lanes of the archipelago to the international trade with China, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf. This must have inspired both local jealousies and the concern of the Malay-Sumatran coastal state of Śrīwijaya, which had heretofore been the major player in the maritime trade networks of the archipelago. We know that Dharmawangśa was successful in fending off the attack of a rival overlord, one Haji Wurawari, whose name suggests that he was of Javanese origin, but we are not certain whether or not this attack was supported by the forces of Śrīwijaya. And we know that Dharmawangśa's reign ended with a resounding defeat, the *mahāpralaya*, described in the Pucangan Stele (or Calcutta Stone), dated 1041 CE. Many scholars believe that the *mahāpralaya* was a Śrīwijayan attack aimed at eliminating their most aggressive competitor for control of the maritime trade of the archipelago.

6. *sājñā haji, tan sangśaya parameśwara duga-dugan atūta pādan dening macarita, tan kĕnana wakrokti wākya-wistāra*

Published by Airlangga, the eventual successor of Dharmawangśa, the bilingual inscription of Pucangan tells us that Airlangga was a "relative" (*sambandhin*) of Dharmawangśa and that he was present in the capital in 1006 CE on the occasion of the wedding of Dharmawangśa's daughter. However, this joyous event was interrupted by a disastrous attack that led to the death of Dharmawangśa and to the complete destruction of his "palace" (*kadāṭwan, kraton*). Airlangga himself barely managed to escape to the surrounding forests accompanied by one Narottama, whose name ("best among men"), suggests he must have been a royal chaplain or other religious official of high standing in the court.[7]

With this as background it is small wonder that Dharmawangśa may have preferred a prose rendering of the *Mahābhārata* materials, which in this form could be read as handbook on political action, and the successful strategies of an illustrious lineage of mythical royal ancestors. This is especially clear in a passage of the *Wirāṭaparwa* that seems to allude to the political vicissitudes that must have been very much on Dharmawangśa's mind as he struggled to maintain his hold on power in the face of local and distant threats to his authority:

> Truly we will not pass over even those parts of the story that bring with them a feeling of fear. Thus it will be fitting to open this book a times when victory over insolent enemies (is your goal). (At such times) my lord King should cause this book to be heard.[8]

The reign of Dharmawangśa is especially noted for the composition of works that now form the major part of the canon of OJ Parwa, including the *Wirāṭaparwa, Ādiparwa*, and *Bhīṣmaparwa*, as well as a rendering in OJ prose of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*.[9] While the fear of political instability may well have figured heavily into Dharmawangśa's preference for a prose idiom, there may have been other factors that affected his thinking on literary matters. We know that the shift of the political center from Central to East Java was a gradual

7. See Jordaan 2006, for an insightful review of the events related in the Pucangan Stele and of the several earlier readings of these events. Some of these readings can now be understood as seriously misleading, while others are more judicious and less prone to adopting Berg's regrettable tendency to deny that *any* Javanese text can be read at face value. These earlier readings include those of Kern 1885, 1913; Krom 1913; van Stein Callenfels 1919; Berg 1938; Poerbatjaraka 1941; Moens 1950; Boechari 1968; and de Casparis 1958, 1999. In this chapter I accept Jordaan's assessment of events, thus dating the *mahāpralaya* as 1006 CE, rather than the year 1016 CE claimed by a majority of the other commentators on this inscription.

8. *tuhun ta n trāsanāna ning kathā juga tan kāntuna [...] yatanyan wĕnang ongkaba pustaka yadyapin hana jaya-prasangga-dūṣaṇa rĕngwakna teking kathā de parameśwara*

9. See Hunter (2006) for a recent study of the OJ prose *Uttarakāṇḍa* based on the publication of a critical edition of the OJ text edited by the late P. J. Zoetmulder 2006.

process extending over the reigns of Balitung, Dakṣa, Tuloḍong, Wawa, and Siṇḍok and that it in part responded to the favorable economic opportunities offered by the Brantas river valley, both in terms of hinterland rice production and access to deep water ports along the northeast coast.[10] But it also appears possible that catastrophic events influenced this shift of the center of political power. We are not yet certain what these events may have been, but they appear to have been related to volcanic activity. Christie (2001: 4–5) speaks of evidence for volcanic eruptions that resulted in some areas of the Kedu plain being covered with "up to seven meters of hot volcanic mud," while Dumarçay and Royère (2001: xviii) speak of the collapse of an important dam on the River Opak that led to the destruction of "the whole of the west side of the complex" of Prambanan, and was "doubtless one of the reasons for the shift in power to the east of Java at the end of the ninth century."[11]

If we accept the possibility of volcanic eruptions and the collapse of a major dam with consequent damage to a major sanctuary of the Sañjaya dynasty around the year 928 CE, the high visibility of these events may have played a role in the finality of the shift to East Java. This in turn may have been one factor in the "turn away from *vakrokti*" that emerged during the reign of Dharmawangśa.

It is important in this context to note a shift in the terminology of the inscriptions during the reign of Mpu Siṇḍok. Barrett Jones (1984: 5) has brought out this point by comparing earlier inscriptions describing the capital of Mataram as a living center of political and social life presided over by the resident monarch (*kaḍatwan śrī maharaja ing bhūmi Mataram*) to a later stage during the reign of Siṇḍok when it is spoken of as "the palace of the divine spirits of Medang" (*kaḍatwan ra-hyang-ta i Mḍang i bhūmi Mataram*). This suggests that the Central Javanese homeland of the Javanese dynasties was understood after 928 CE as a "place of the ancestors" and lends support to the idea that the finality of the shift of the political center to East Java in 928 CE may have been related to disasters that were interpreted as portents of further catastrophes that could only be avoided by shifting the royal center.

In this context it is possible to understand the shift away from a royal preference for "figural language" (*vakrokti*) as arising in part from a distrust for the kinds of metaphysical power that appear to have been associated with the figural style of works like the metrical inscription of 856 CE. This inscription is

10. See Barrett Jones 1984, 6–7, for a review of the economic factors that may have played an important role in the shift of the political center to the Brantas river basin of East Java.

11. Dumarçay and Royère do not give a source for their information, but it would seem to refer to an article by Wessing and Jordaan 1997. Dumarçay and Royère incorrectly refer to the date of the Śivagṛha inscription and consecration of Prambanan as 854 CE, 2001: xviii and n. 6, p. xviii, rather than the correct date equivalent to 856 CE found in the inscription.

notable for its heavy use of *yamaka* to present multiple images of power in a public setting, its use of an as-yet-undecipherable "secret language" (verses 20–21) and its incorporation of "chirographic riddles" drawn from the *prahelikā* tradition of India (*akṣara-cyutaka* in Verse 23, *windu-cyutaka* in Verse 24). One thing is certain: the literary preferences of the tenth century represent an innovation in the history of Javanese letters, one that turned away from a poetic, figural form of expression that drew heavily on both the *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra* traditions of India and embraced a prose style perhaps judged to be more suited to the needs of a dynamic, young, polity facing political opposition at home and abroad. But as we shall see presently, this "prose interlude" in the history of OJ letters was not destined to become an enduring part of the literary picture.

C. Processions: A Thematic Link between Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, and the *Kakawin* Poets

Before turning attention to the East Javanese tradition in kakawin composition, I propose to review the descriptions of royal processions found in a number of *kakawin* that are very important in establishing a link between the praxis of the poets of East Java and South Asia during the era of the Sanskrit ecumene. I will suggest that the evidence of the *kakawin* bears witness to a continuous study of Indian models even during the period when the figural and metrical tradition of the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* had been eclipsed by the prose tradition of the OJ Parwa. One place this shows up very clearly is in the tradition of describing the excited throngs of spectators who greet a leading hero and his entourage as they pass through the court city.

South Asian models for processional passages are best known from the *Buddhacarita* (BC) of Aśvaghoṣa and the *Kumārasaṃbhava* (KS) and *Raghuvaṃśa* (RV) of Kālidāsa. OJ sources for parallel passages include, inter alia, the *Bhāratayuddha* (BY), *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* (GK), *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* (KY), and *Sumanasāntaka* (Sum), which is based on Cantos V–VIII of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. A partial list of some of the thematic correspondences that can be traced between the Indian and Javanese sources brings out the degree to which the Javanese poets responded to the models of Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa:[12]

- women (or crowds) push and shove as they rush to catch a glimpse of the procession:
 Sanskrit: BC 3.15d, RV 7.6–11, KS 7.57–62
 Old Javanese: BY 2.7–8, KY 25.9, Sum 25.8

12. We will note number of points at which there is a close correspondence between Indian models and one of the processional scenes from the *kakawin Sumanasāntaka* (Sum). At the same

- women (or crowds) drink in the Prince or god with their eyes:
 Sanskrit: RV 7.12, KS 7.64
 Old Javanese: GK 13.14
- Prince compared to Love God who has descended to earth:
 Sanskrit: BC 3.24, RV 7.15
 Old Javanese: KY 26.2 (b), Sum 25.7
- Prince said to glow, or compared to sun or moon:
 Sanskrit: BC 3.12
 Old Javanese: KY 26.1 (a), Sum 25.16
- faces of women observing the procession compared to lotuses:
 Sanskrit: BC 3.10, 3.19, 3.20, 3.21; RV 7.11
 Old Javanese: KY 25.13, 26.4 (a-b)
- woman's braid or hair-knot left undone:
 Sanskrit: RV 7.6
 Old Javanese: BY 2.7 (c), KY 25.9
- some portion of makeup left half-finished:
 Sanskrit: RV 7.8
 Old Javanese: BY 2.7 (d), BY 2.9 (a), KY 25.9b, KY 25.12 (c)
- woman's skirt or other article of clothing not completely fastened:
 Sanskrit: RV 7.10
 Old Javanese: BY 2.10 (a), KY 25.9 (d)

In the Indian critical tradition the contributions of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* to this line of development are often passed over in favor of examples from the *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Kumārasambhava*, yet as often as not Kālidāsa's images respond to those of Aśvaghoṣa, reworking them in an innovative fashion that involves rearrangements of the literal order of syntactic units to create the kinds of contrastive effects known as *Sperrung* to the German Latinists.[13] Compare, for example, Aśvaghoṣa's relatively straightforward treatment of the theme of women rushing in disarray to catch a glimpse of Siddhārtha with Kālidāsa's similar

time Monaguṇa brings in new material from the Javanese context, for example building images around the shared taking of betel quid (Sum 25.13, 15) or characterizing the king's glow as resembling a volcano that burns to ash the flower-forests of the thoughts and desires of the spectators (Sum 25.16). These examples are significant in that they bring out the importance of a Javanese aesthetic in shaping the work of composers like Monaguṇa; however, they should not be taken as obscuring the larger, overall relationship of Mpu Monaguṇa's treatment of the processional theme in Sum 25.8, 11–17 with the models of Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa.

13. See Pollock 1977 for use of the term *Sperrung* in analysis of the Indian metrical tradition.

rendering of one woman's reaction to the news that Lord Rāma is passing by in the streets below her balcony:

a. *Buddhacarita* 3.15
With loud clanging of their feet on palace stairs,
The clatter of their jeweled girdles, the jingling of their anklets,
They terrify flocks of birds in the house-yard,
As in their haste, they push each other aside.[14]

b. *Raghuvaṃśa* 7.7
Her servant supports the tip of her foot,
But she draws away—no matter that its paint is wet,
Abandoning her studied, playful walk,
she spreads—even as far as the window,
a line of footprints, brilliantly red.[15]

c. *Bhāratayuddha* 2.7
The crowds of people, who longed to see Kṛṣṇa as he passed by,
Hurriedly flocked to the observation stands, afraid that they might miss the occasion,
Some hadn't finished arranging their hair, so they ran with hair-knots undone, falling apart along the way,
Others had left off blackening their teeth, so their mouths looked striped, half-white, half-black.[16]

Other examples show a line of descent from Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa to the Javanese poets Triguṇa and Monaguṇa, both *kakawin* composers of thirteenth-century Kaḍiri. In one series of related examples that hinge on figures comparing women's faces crowding together as they view a passing procession of heroes to lotuses tightly packed in a pond, we find representatives in the *Buddhacarita*

14. *prāsādasopānatalapraṇādaiḥ kāñcīravair nūpura-niṣvanais ca/*
vitrāsayantyo gṛhapakṣisaṅghān anyonyavegāṃś ca samākṣipantyaḥ//

15. *prāsādhikâlaṃbitam agra-pādam ākṣipya kācid drava-rāgam eva/*
utsṛṣṭa-līlā-gatir ā gavākṣād alaktakāṅkāṃ padavīṃ tatāna//

See also *Kumārasambhava* 7.57–62.

16. *ikang wwang aharĕp tuminghala ri sang narendra ṇ ḍatĕng*
paḍâgarawalan marĕng pangungungan wĕdi n kāntuna/
hanâmahayu keśa tapwan agĕlung rusak ring hĕṇu
dudu tang asisig hatur sinaliwah katon tan tulus//

The theme of an article of adornment left half-finished found here in BY 2.8 likely goes back to RV 7.8, where a woman runs along with her eye-pencil in hand, having blackened one eye with collyrium, but not the other. For the custom of teeth-blackening in ancient Southeast Asia see Reid 1988.

(BC 3.21), the *Raghuvaṃśa* (RV 7.11), the *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* of Mpu Triguṇa (KY 26.13), and the *Sumanasāntaka* of Mpu Monaguṇa (Sum 52.11). In the Javanese examples the windows (*gavākṣa, vātāyana*) of the women's apartments of the Indian tradition have been replaced by the "viewing stands" (*panggung*) of the Javanese world.[17]

d. *Sumanasāntaka* 52.11
The king of Magadha set out, his drums roaring loudly, thundering in the ear,
All the women who looked on from the viewing stands were amazed by his graceful good looks; they crowded together with their cheeks pressed tightly together,
So they seemed to be wearing each other's earrings, extraordinarily lovely, arranged in rows there as they watched the procession,
As if a single shining form, they appeared like the moon divided into sections by the God of Love.[18]

David Shulman (1985) has demonstrated the continuing popularity of the theme of processions in his study of the *ulā*, a genre devoted to royal processions that gained an important place in the twelfth-century literature of the Tamil country thanks to the skill of master poets of the Chola court like Oṭṭakkūttar. The erotically charged atmosphere of these processional scenes was an essential part of a poetics and ritual practice that imbued the king with a potent energy of fertility. These were the complement of his wartime powers of aggrandizement, factors that must have played as large a role in the East Javanese configuration of erotic and martial energies as they did in the Tamil country of the same time period. Kālidāsa is typically restrained in his presentation of the erotic atmosphere of the processional scenes, focusing largely on portraying the desire-driven

17. It may be of note here that while the comparison of the women's faces with lotuses has been retained throughout all three sources, the description of the effects of the closeness of the women's pendant earrings as they crowd together is retained only in the *Buddhacarita* and *Sumanasāntaka*, thus suggesting that this figure entered the Javanese tradition by way of the *Buddhacarita*. This possibility is supported by I Ching's noting that the BC was studied in Śrīwijaya ca. 671–689 CE. See Takakusu 2006 on I Ching's studies in Sumatra. He reports beginning his journey in 671 CE and arriving in the coastal state of Kedah of 673 CE after having spent six months studying Sanskrit and works of the Mahāyāna canon in Śrīwijaya, whose capital is believed to have been located near present day Palembang on the Musi River.

18. *mangkat śrī Magadheśwarâtri gumuruh paḍahi nira karĕngw agĕnturan*
sakweh ning mangungang kapūhan i halĕp nira paḍa mapipit-pipit mukha//
kady ângarwani sumping endah araras pinatihakĕn ika n paḍângungang
tunggal warṇa nikâbungah kadi wulan sasiki pinarawĕñca ning smara// (Sum 52.11)

haste of the women as they rush to catch a glimpse of the procession. By contrast, scenes from the *kakawin* are often more explicitly erotic, in this appearing to share with the *ulā* a greater stress on the erotic aspects of kingship than is found in the case of either Aśvaghoṣa or Kālidāsa. Thus compare passages from the *Raghuvaṃśa* and the *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* of Mpu Triguṇa, both responding to the theme of an incompletely tied garment, but with considerably more attention to erotic possibilities in the OJ rendering:

a. *Raghuvaṃśa* 7.9
 Her gaze fixed upon the window opening, another stood
 with her hand holding her garment,
 That hung loosely where she had failed to tie its knot,
 Its lustrous ornament throwing light upon her navel.[19]

b. *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* 25.11
 Another woman suddenly overtaken by passion and desire, was
 bewildered by the tumult of her desire,
 Swish—she was on her way without awaiting her servant, who
 followed along after her unheeded,
 Her fragrant skirts blew open, exposing her calves and laying
 bare the mark that is like the bursting open of a ripe *pandan*
 blossom,
 Her *sampur* scarves were exquisite, caressing her breasts like
 writing material folded under the arm.[20]

The processional scenes of the OJ tradition provide us with two important insights. Through a comparison of such scenes from the works of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, and the composers of *kakawin* we can say with a high degree of certainty that major early works of the *kāvya* tradition played an important role in the shaping of OJ poetic praxis, and through such literary links also played a role

19. *jālāntara-preṣita-dṛṣṭir anyā prasthānabhinnāṃ na babandha nīvīm/*
nābhi-praviṣṭābharaṇa-prabheṇa hastena tasthāv avalambya vāsaḥ//

20. *len tang ringrang akūng wirangrwang adadak turida raga-ragan katanggama*
les lunghālagi tan panganti kawulângiring anututi tan hinerakĕn/
kenkenya mrik angingkab-ingkab umingis prawala kadi pamingkisan puḍak
sampur-sampur ikârja warṇa lĕpihan linapitan aharas lawan susu//

Compare also *Arjunawiwāha* 14.2.

Similes comparing a woman's calves exposed by the movement of her skirts to the flower sheaf of the *pandan* are legion. Here there is the complication of the phrase *umingis prawala* "lay bare the mark," which seems to refer to the woman's *mons veneris* by way of a sophisticated reference to its being a "mark" in the signing of gender, which in turn can be compared to the shape of a blossoming sheaf of a variety of the *pandan* (*Pandanus odoratissimus*) notable for its abundance of fragrant pollen.

in the evolution of social practices and conventions like the "viewing stands" of the Javano-Balinese tradition. Second, the appearance of processions as a major thematic element in the East Javanese and Balinese *kakawin* suggests that there was no lacuna in the study of the *kāvya* between the time of the OJR and the composition of the AW. We can thus understand the appearance of processional scenes in the *kakawin* as dating back as far as the seventh century CE, when I Ching noted the study of the *Buddhacarita* in Śrīwijaya and a continuing development of the depiction of processional scenes that spans the period of the first study of Aśvaghoṣa in the archipelago through the heyday of *kakawin* production in Java.

We should note here the importance of the interplay between textual and oral tradition that is evident over the long history of Javano-Balinese textual and performance traditions. Kadarisman (1999) has done special service to this field by describing the specialized use of language in genres like the shadow theatre (*wayang*) as a form of "verbal art" whose proper field of study should be within a field of comparative ethno-poetics, like that opened up by Jakobson (1980, 1985, 1987 *inter alia*). The early presence of performance genres like the shadow plays (*wayang*) that transmitted orally episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* is supported by the presence of names drawn from the epics in the lists of villagers found in the early inscriptions of Java (cf. Christie 1991) as well as by direct references from Balinese inscriptions (Bebetin, 896 CE) and descriptions in kakawin like the *Arjunawiwāha* (AW 5.9). It seems likely that the "verbal arts" of ancient Java were an important factor in the dissemination of literary themes developed in courtly and religious institutions to a larger audience, thus further enlarging the circle of participants in the trans-local culture which, on the courtly and religious side, was dominated by the production of works in *kakawin* or Parwa form. If we may draw an analogy with modern Bali, the practice of reading and listening to the *kakawin* in the context of reading clubs (*sěkaha pěsantian, sěkaha běbasan*) is one source of narrative information for performance genres like the *wayang*, while the performance genres themselves support a continued attention to the epic sources (as well as to other "classical" genres of the Balinese past).[21]

D. Airlangga and the Dawn of the Classical *Kakawin* Style

Within a few decades of the "great catastrophe" that ended the political career of Dharmawangśa, another innovation in the ancient literature of Java was ushered

21. See *Sumanasāntaka* (Sum 113.4–7) for a description of "folk players" like *pirus, tangkil hyang, menmen, amacangah*, and *wayang wong* at a wedding ceremony.

in under the patronage of his young relative, Airlangga. This was a return to the figural style in poetics and the inception of the "classical kakawin" form, whose first exemplar is the *Arjunawiwāha* (AW). Composed by Mpu Kaṇwa during the years around 1035 CE, this work was the product of a poet with a firm claim to royal patronage. We know this to be true because the poet himself speaks of completing the AW just at the point when he was called away to accompany Airlangga on the extensive military campaigns that led to the consolidation of his realm.[22]

Mpu Kaṇwa's *Arjunawiwāha*, or "Marriage of Arjuna" (AW), made a clear break with the earlier tradition of the mid-ninth century and set a standard for all that was to follow. It would be difficult to over-estimate the impact of the *Arjunawiwāha*. Its characteristic form and phrasing are echoed throughout the later tradition, and its popularity remains undiminished even today among the "recitation clubs" (*pepaosan, pesantian*) of Bali, who rank it alongside the OJR as one of the two most important works in the literary canon of the *kakawin*.

The AW offers us evidence of several kinds for continuing attention to the traditions of the *kāvya*. Breaking with the standard set by the OJR, for example, Mpu Kaṇwa adopted the Indian principle of "one canto—one meter" and the formal requirement of initiating a poetic work with an auspicious *manggala* verse (or verses).[23] Kaṇwa did not follow the Indian traditions to the letter. For example, he did not adopt the practice of ending a canto with a shift to one or two verses in a different meter, nor does he follow the common practice of choosing a special auspicious word to begin the *manggala* verse. Yet there can be little doubt that he looked to the Indian tradition for these two aspects of *kakawin* composition that remained constant following his innovations. As Kuntara (1990) has demonstrated, this is also true of his attention to fulfilling the thematic requirements of *kāvya*.[24]

From a comparative perspective perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the AW is its relationship to the *Kirātārjunīya* (KA) of Bhāravi, especially in its mirroring the reconciliation of the thematics of renunciation and political action developed by Bhāravi. This is another aspect of the AW that has had a lasting

22. The Pucangan Stele (Calcutta Stone) of 1041 CE commemorates this consolidation. However, only a year after the publication of this inscription Airlangga divided his kingdom between two of his sons, apparently with the aim of warding off a conflict that was all too inevitable. See especially Buchari 1968 on this point.

23. See Daṇḍin (*Kāvyādarśa* 1.14) for the requirement of beginning a work with the auspicious *manggala* verse. See Zoetmulder 1974, 173–75, 177–85, 473–505, for an illuminating study of the *manggala* tradition in the *kakawin*.

24. In general the *kakawin* appear to follow the well-known list of Daṇḍin in *Kāvyādarśa* 1. 16–17, 21–22.

impact: the development of an ideology of "action in renunciation" reverberates all throughout the later history of the archipelago, especially in the areas most affected by the Javanese style in literature, the shadow theatre (*wayang*) and the practice of statecraft.

Opinions differ on the degree to which Mpu Kaṇwa modeled his work on that of Bhāravi. Zoetmulder (1974: 240) acknowledged that the AW follows Bhāravi more closely than the epic version of the Arjuna-kirāta story found in the thirty-seventh *adhyāya* of the *Vanaparvan*. However, noting the difficulties of Bhāravi's language, he took a cautious tone in ascribing more than a general influence of Bhāravi on Mpu Kaṇwa:

> At most it might be imagined, though perhaps not proved, that *mpu* Kaṇwa [...] knew Bhāravi's poem at least in its general outlines, and that this prompted him to borrow from it the theme of the unsuccessful seduction, with all the opportunity for description that it gives.

Indira Peterson (2003: 161–62, 173) takes a more optimistic view of the possible influence of Bhāravi's courtly epic on the composition of Mpu Kaṇwa. She groups the AW with the *Vikramārjunavijaya*, Pampa's court epic in Kannada language, speaking of the AW as one of two post-Bhāravi versions of the epic tale that "share the courtly spirit of the *Kirātārjunāiya*." Peterson (2003: 183) calls special attention to the way that Mpu Kaṇwa treated the climactic moments of the wrestling match between Arjuna and Śiva, concluding that Mpu Kaṇwa followed Bhāravi more closely than did Pampa, or the author(s) of the *Śivapurāṇa* (2003: 183).

In an earlier study (Hunter 2004) I have juxtaposed the narrative sequence of the KA with a combination of two works in *kakawin* form, the *Arjunawiwāha* (AW) and the *Pārthayajña* (PYn), showing that the PYn aligns almost precisely with cantos 1–5 of the KA, while the first 12 cantos of the AW align with cantos 6–18 of the KA. In another study (Hunter 2011) I have shown that there are some differences between the way that Bhāravi and Mpu Kaṇwa describe the climax of the struggle between Arjuna and Śiva in his disguise as a "mountain hunter" (*kirāta*). However, the version of this story illustrated in the narrative reliefs at Caṇḍi Jago (ca. 1268–1343) show us that the version of this scene presented in the KA was well known in the archipelago and was reflected in the visual traditions of a later period.

The narrative core of the AW is nearly identical with that of the KA: Arjuna meditates on Mount Indrakīla in order to attain the supernatural weapon he and his brothers will need in their impending struggle with their implacable cousins, the Kaurava; the god Indra tests his ascetic resolve, first by sending a beautiful corps of heavenly nymphs to seduce him, then by appearing himself in

the guise of an aged sage who advises him to give up his ascetic pursuit and goal of achieving the favor of Śiva. Arjuna encounters a wild boar that he slays with his arrow, but then must struggle with a "mountain hunter" (*kirāta*), who claims his arrow has done the deed; during the ensuing battle, the *kirāta* is revealed to be the god Śiva himself, who praises Arjuna for his courage and grants him the *pāśupata* weapon that will ensure his success in the coming battle with the Kaurava.

Although a close comparison will show that Mpu Kaṇwa did not attempt to mirror the complexities of Bhāravi's language to the same degree as the author(s) of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* followed the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, there are often thematic relationships that show up at the verse level, rather than simply in terms of the overall narrative structure. These include verses from the "temptation of Arjuna" like the following:

a. *Kirātārjunīya* 10.45
 When—before the eyes of the sage (Arjuna)—a gust of wind
 suddenly lifted a corner of another woman's skirt, the sight of
 the bare, trembling thigh of that bashful maiden put even her
 rivals in a fluster.[25]

b. *Arjunawiwāha* 4.6
 There was one of the heavenly nymphs whose method of seduction
 was to playfully lay her head on Arjuna's lap
 and pretend to be all alone, left behind by the others to wait there
 all by herself.
 Her skirt slipped open, as if laughing because of its power of
 attraction.
 Something could be seen there—half-revealed—that seemed
 annoyed at being disregarded.[26]

The association of this tale with the life and career of Airlangga are well known. Like Arjuna, Airlangga endured the loss of a kingdom early in his career, in this case the East Javanese kingdom of his uncle, Dharmawangśa Tĕguh. In the course of time he was able to regain the kingdom, but not without a long period of struggle that was initiated with his retreat to the mountains and forests directly after the "great catastrophe" (*mahāpralaya*) of 906 CE. Airlangga's fondness for the tale of Arjuna's mediation is attested equally by his patronage for

25. *avasanoru satrapāyāḥ hṛte parasyā / ghanamarutā jaghanāṃśukaikadeśe/ cakitam avasanorusatrapāyāḥ / pratiyuvatīr api vismayaṃ ninãya//*

26. *sweccha hanan tĕhĕr asanghulunan lĕkasnya / mĕnggĕp kĕñĕp hinilagan kapitunggal angher kenken mingis kadi pacĕh tĕkap ing kaśaktin / wwantĕn katon idĕm-idĕm cala tan tinanggap.*

Mpu Kaṇwa's composition of the AW and his legendary association with the reliefs depicting the AW story found at the Sĕlĕm Agĕng cave, located near the southern reaches of the Brantas river valley, and still considered to have been the site of Airlangga's meditations during several stages of his political career.

Against this historical backdrop it may be instructive to compare the conditions of Mpu Kaṇwa's composition of the AW with a similar tale about the composition of the KA that is still popular in Andhra and Karnataka. As Mpu Kaṇwa himself tells us in AW 36.2, he completed his tale of the penance of Arjuna just as he was about to accompany his royal patron to the battlefield, thus perhaps offering an implicit apology for the relative brevity of his *kakawin*:

> I, the poet Mpu Kaṇwa have thus woven together the tale that is to be known as the Marriage of Arjuna.
> Clearly it is my first attempt to put words in order to produce a kakawin.
> I am agitated and confused, for I am about to go to the battlefield, accompanying my Lord King,
> Śrī Airlangghya, may his name be praised, over whom poets break their pens that he might show them favor.[27]

As Salomon (1998: 233) tells us, the Aihoḷe inscription sheds important light on the life of Bhāravi: it not only assures us of Bhāravi's fame at the time of its composition, but provides us with his *terminus ante quem* at the same time that it advances the claims of the author of the inscription to an innovative skill that rivals that of his predecessors:

> Inscriptions not infrequently assist in providing precise or approximate dates for prominent literary figures. The classic case is the Aihoḷe inscriptions (EI 6, 1–12), which provides a definite *terminus ante quem* of A.D. 634/35 for both Kālidāsa and Bhāravi in the form of a boast by its composer Ravikīrti of having equaled in his verses the renown of those two great poets (II. 17–18).

According to the apocryphal tale mentioned earlier, Bhāravi composed his tale while accompanying Vikramāditya in his struggle to restore Chālukyan power after the attack of the Pallava king Nārasiṃhavarman in 642 CE had brought an end to the reign of his father, Pulakeśin II. Since the Aihoḷe inscription was

27. *sampun kekĕtan ing kathârjunawiwāha pangarana nike/*
sākṣāt tambay ira mpu Kaṇwa tumatâmĕtu-mĕtu kakawin/
bhrāntâpan tĕhĕr angharĕp samarakārya mangiring ing aji/
śrī Airlangghya namo 'stu sang panikĕlan tanah anganumata//

composed in 634/35 CE, its evidence renders this tale highly improbable, if not impossible, in that it was composed not at a time when Bhāravi may have been Vikramāditya's companion in a time of struggle, but at a time when his fame had nearly equaled that of Kālidāsa. This implies a span of at least one generation following the time when Bhāravi was actively composing, and a time when his accomplishments in composition would have been given the stamp of general approval. This suggests that Bhāravi was composing as early as the middle to late sixth century, rather than the mid-seventh century, the time of Vikramāditya's struggle and rise to power.

Even though the evidence of the Aihoḷe inscription casts serious doubt on the possibility that Bhāravi accompanied Vikramāditya in his campaign to restore the fortunes of the western Chālukyas, there may be a grain of truth in the apocryphal tale. It may be that the tale reflects distant memories of an association of Bhāravi with the political struggles of an earlier Chālukyan monarch. This is a possibility that will remain in the realm of conjecture until and unless further evidence comes to light. It is also possible that the apocryphal tale linking Bhāravi and Vikramāditya may have spread to the archipelago early enough to have had some influence in Java, thus inspiring Mpu Kaṇwa to choose this particular *kāvya* as his model. Bhāravi's achievement lay not merely in his masterful deployment of the figural and rhetorical devices of the *kāvya*, but in his producing a literary work that overcame the dualism of aesthetic and martial elements in the Brahmin vision of society and molded them into a doctrine well-suited to political actors in the highly contested arena of Indian kingship.

E. The East Javanese Figural Tradition 1: Mpu Kaṇwa and the Development of Techniques of Suggestion in the East Javanese *Kakawin*

When we turn our attention to Mpu Kaṇwa's development of figural resources, we encounter a problem of literary history that is not likely to be solved without a great deal more attention to the entire field of OJ studies. This is the question of whether the remarkable development of techniques of suggestion that begins with Mpu Kaṇwa can be linked to the "school of suggestion" (*dhvani*) that began to dominate South Asian discourses on poetics and aesthetics after Ānandavardhana composed his epochal *Dhvanyāloka* in the late ninth century CE.[28]

28. See Gerow 1977, for a review of the literature on Ānandavardhana, and on his place in the tradition of Indian poetics, McCrae (2007) for a recent work that sheds valuable critical light on the place of Ānandavardhana in the history of Indian poetics.

Certainly there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence for the influence of the "school of suggestion" on the *kakawin*, and in a broader sense a phenomenology of aesthetic and affective realms of experience whose roots go back to the theory of *rasa* initially developed around the critical study of the Sanskrit drama. The long-term effects of an informal, but influential, body of local knowledge around *rasa* can be seen at work even today over a large stretch of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. A terminology based on *rasa* ("taste, feeling") and derived forms like *perasaan* ("feelings") and *rasanya* ("I feel; it seems") serves on the one hand to delineate feelings, on the other to express flavours and tastes, thus linking affective and sensory realms of experience much as they are linked in the Indian tradition. A vocabulary around *rasa* has also developed as a major term in aesthetic judgments of works and performances as widely separate as the ultra-refined *bedhaya* dance of the Javanese courts, the recitation of Qur'anic verses, and the latest hits in popular musical idioms like *jaipongan* and *keroncong*.[29]

We will return to the influence of the theories of *rasa* and *dhvani* presently, after first analyzing a verse from the *Arjunawiwāha* for the information it can shed on the development of figural resources within the OJ tradition. We will find here that the Javanese poets developed specific techniques of suggestion that link the OJ tradition to Indian counterparts, but that developed along the lines of possibility offered by the semantic and syntactic organization of OJ as it was consciously moulded into a literary dialect able to stand alongside Sanskrit as a vehicle of concentrated poetic expression.

Too little work has been done on assessing the formal aspects of the *kakawin*—its rhetorical and text-building strategies, its characteristic modes of diction and other matters commonly developed in the critical study of other literatures with a similar claim to classical status.[30] We cannot attempt anything approaching a properly detailed study here. However, we can at least note a characteristic shifting in the *kakawin* between several modes of expression that give a unique flavour to the *kakawin* of the East Javanese period. The first two of these modes—narrative and dialogue—are common to much of the dramatic and epic repertoire of world literature and have much in common with those modes of expression elsewhere. The third is a lyrical mode that, once again, shares much with counterparts elsewhere. However, the particular form taken by this mode in the *kakawin*, and the way it is situated within the *kakawin*,

29. See Gade 2002, for a study that discusses uses of the term *rasa* in aesthetic judgments of performances of Qur'anic recitation in Indonesia. See Stang 1984, for general studies of the understanding of *rasa* in Java, Hunter 2002, for a study of the development of the term as an explanatory system in the Indonesian novel *Salah Asuhan* (Abdul Muis, 1928).

30. See Teeuw and Robson 2005 for a study that calls attention to the Homeric dimensions of *kakawin* classics like *Bhomāntaka*.

deserve special attention. What I am terming a "lyrical mode within the kakawin" are the *bhāṣa-kakawin* verses (comparable to the *muktaka* of India) that appear especially at points where there is an exchange of missives between lovers, or would-be lovers, or a public exchange of verses in contexts like the "bridal choice contest" (OJ *swayambara*) of Indumatī in the *kakawin Sumanasāntaka* (Sum 66.1–109.8).

There are many indications in the *kakawin* that this mode of expressing romantic or erotic sentiments in a series of lyrical verses was a regular part of the court life of East Java, and indeed was a measure of the ability of young nobles to project an aura of attraction crucial to their ability to survive and prosper in the aestheticized mode of the political life of the court. The *kakawin* also provide us with the names given to this type of lyrical verse in the courtly tradition. We most often find the phrases *rasa kakawin* or *bhāṣa-kakawin* to refer to these lyric verses, but also find *pralambang* and *palambang*, which likely refer to the form they take when they are inscribed on panels of wood destined to be hung in the eaves of a "poet's pavilion" (*mahantĕn*).[31]

One of the earliest examples of a verse that makes use of the typical phrasing of the *bhāṣa kakawin* form is AW 1.10. This is a verse worth considering in detail, for it introduces the subtle uses of the syntactic and semantic possibilities of OJ that are characteristic of the lyrical voice in the *kakawin*. This verse appears at the end of a short stretch of narrative and dialogue that introduces the initial problem of the AW: the god Indra is concerned that Arjuna's attempt to win Śiva's favor through a course of asceticism may not have a firm enough foundation, and so decides to send the heavenly nymphs to attempt a seduction that will test Arjuna's resolve.[32] First he asks the nymphs if he can "borrow their beauty [...] to search out the heart of Arjuna" (AW 1.9). He then shifts into a lyrical mode to describe how they will know whether or not their mission has been successful:

> If the beauty of the *asana* blossom when it greets the gently misting rain cannot reach him,
> Nor the decree of desire roused by the pale glow of moon, like side-long glances cast from the sky,
> And if he shows disdain for tendrils of the *gadung* lily that resemble a loosened chignon,

31. See Zoetmulder 1974, 144–47 and Robson 1983, for two important discussions of these terms.

32. The question of Arjuna's asceticism (*tapas*) resulting in the accumulation of sufficient power to threaten Indra's position as lord of the gods does not appear to be developed explicitly in the AW.

Then return home, my daughters, for your beauty will have been defeated, and the power of the Love God turned back.

yan tan poliha rūm sĕkar ning asânanungsung rarab ning rĕrĕb
tan pangdeha raras liring ni luru ning lek lwir wulat ning langit/
mwang yan kelikana ng gaḍung wahu mure mambö gĕlung kesisan
t antuk tebu huwus hayunta kabalik hyang Kāma yan mangkanā//
(AW 1.10)

One can immediately sense the figural dimension that is opened up with this verse. Yet the translation as given here masks important elements of indirection that are found in the original, and thus to some extent obscures this early evidence for the development of techniques of suggestion based on the resources of OJ. If we look closely at this verse we can get a better sense of the techniques first evident in Mpu Kaṇwa's poetics that remained an important part of *kakawin* composition throughout its millennium long history.

Let us look first at the phrase *rarab ning rĕrĕb*, which I have translated as "the gently misting rain." This may be an adequate translation, representing a slight variation on the more literal "gentle fall of the misting rain." However, it fails to capture what might be termed the "internal rhyme" of the phrase, a combination of assonance (a-ĕ) and alliteration (r, b) that can also be understood in terms of the contrast of the vowels /a/ and /ĕ/ that alone differentiates the closely related words *rarab* and *rĕrĕb*. Now it happens that the liquids /r/ and /l/ figure very heavily in OJ in words having to do with beauty. These are often words that have a bivalent aspect first noted by Zoetmulder (1974). On the one hand, they signify the quality in an object that makes it attractive, on the other the experience of beauty that is evoked in the perceiving subject. Words of this type include those that can be translated as "beauty" or "enchantment" (*langö, lĕngĕng*) as well as those that denote a power of attraction, and double as words for the experience of beauty and erotic pleasure (*raras*). A series of words like *rarab, rĕrĕb*, and *raras* can thus be seen to represent a coherent group of signifiers related through phonological form that evoke meanings around beauty and desire—two aspects of human experience well known to be inter-related in both the Indian and Javano-Balinese traditions of erotics and aesthetics.[33]

But the phrase *rarab ning rĕrĕb* has more still in store for us: it stands at the beginning of a tradition of artful citations that show up with slight variation in later classics like *Ghatoṭkacāśraya* (GK 20.1), *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* (KY 34.6), *Smaradahana* (SD 22.17) and *Sumanasāntaka* (Sum 3.4), and appear also to be invoked in later *kakawin* like *Śiwaratrikalpa* (SR 3.10) and the Balinese *kakawin*

33. For a recent work on the Javano-Balinese traditions of erotics see Bellows and Creese 2002.

Subhadrāwiwāha (SubhW 4.12). Consider this example from the GK, found in one of two verses in *bhāṣa kakawin* form that are sent by Kṣitisundarī to Kṛṣṇa to relate to him the deep feelings of affection that have grown in her since their last meeting:

"If you will give no ear
to the heartsick call of the *taḍah-asih* bird
as again and again it pitifully cries out,
If you push away
the tendrils of the *gaḍung* creeper
that long fervently to twine round
the just unfolding fronds of the sugar palm,
Then, like the wilting of drought-stricken plants
that anxiously await
the soft fall of misting rain (*rarab ning rĕrĕb*),
Without a doubt I will die
with the waning moon,
following the ebb of the ocean tides."

Poetic echoes of this type tell us that the art of creating a setting in one's own *kakawin* for a phrase like *rarab ning rĕrĕb* was considered a mark of poetic distinction, and may even have represented a *sine qua non* for acceptance as a poet, a sign of one's control of figural resources that were within the "horizon of expectation" of a learned audience, but were innovative enough to evoke a sense of wonder, the *camatkāra* of the Indian tradition, or the *rasa kādbhutan* of the Javanese.[34]

Another case of the development of technique of suggestion at the level of word and phrase can be found in a phrase in line (c) that can be literally translated: "the newly spreading *gaḍung* (vines and flowers) that resemble a loosened chignon" (*ng gaḍung wahu mure mambö gĕlung kesisan*). We frequently encounter similes and metaphors comparing the spreading vines and delicately fragrant ivory-colored flowers of the *gaḍung* lily to a woman's hair loosened on the sleeping mat, while the characteristic twining of the *gaḍung* around trees like the sugar palm (*lirang*) makes it a natural subject for images of lovers united in close embrace.

A more complete analysis of the particular expressive devices of the East Javanese *kakawin* would require attention to semantic and syntactical figures—for example, to the subtleties of the Javanese voice system, and to the characteristic

34. See works of Hans Robert Jauss 1982a, 1982b, for his development of the notion of a "horizon of expectations." (*Erwartungshorizon*) as part of the field of reader-response criticism.

and suggestive use of irrealis and euphony in the developing figural tradition. The result was a mastery of linguistic form that enabled the poets to produce effects of suggestion that shared much with the Indian tradition, but were developed in terms of the specific semantic and syntactic resources of a western Austronesian language. I hope to pursue such an analysis in future studies.

F. The East Javanese Figural Tradition II: The Question of *Rasa* and the *Bhāṣa Kakawin* Form of the Lyrical Verse

We now return to the question of whether the "school of suggestion" (*dhvani*) in its Indian form may have had a direct influence on the poetics of the *kakawin*. Curiously, it appears at the outset that we must dispense with any thought of tracing an unbroken connection to the school of poetics founded by Ānandavardhana. This is because the term *dhvani* is found in the *kakawin* only to describe the reverberating sound of drums or gamelan instruments carried in procession, and nowhere with the meanings that were developed in India by Ānandavardhana and his successors.[35] Nor is *dhvani* found as a technical term in the didactic traditions, or the *Tutur* tradition of texts on metaphysics and liberation of the self.[36] However, as might be expected if the influence of Indian formulations of aesthetic analysis began during a period prior to Ānandavardhana's innovations, the term *rasa* is found with great frequency in the *kakawin*, and with a variety of meanings. Not infrequently uses of the word *rasa* exactly parallel those of the Indian tradition. Thus we find it with the meaning "flavor" of a food or beverage (OJR 5.15, KW 35.11) or referring to the "feeling or sentiment" of a work of art (KY 34.11). In one interesting case (SD 7.11) it appears to stand for both "taste" and "touch" in the usual Sāṅkhya-derived enumeration of the senses. In other cases we find what seems to be an echo of the use of *rasa* as technical terms in the earlier performance-based theoretical framework of the *Bhāratanātyaśāstra*:

> His gentle greeting was in the erotic mode, its feeling penetrating deeply as one listened to it closely (*bwat srnggāra dahat panāntwa nira marma rasa nika rĕsĕp rineṅgwakĕn*)". (*Sumanasāntaka* 103.1)

35. Examples of uses of the term *dhvani* to refer to the reverberating sound of bronze metallaphones or drums include verses HW 18.10, BK 102.8, and BK 106.11–12.

36. It would be premature, however, to reject the possibility of indirect influences from Ānandavardhana entering the archipelago by way of Kashmiri influences on the *Tutur* tradition. It is altogether possible that the fondness of the East Javanese for "figures of superimposition" (*āropa*) like *rūpaka* ("metaphor") and *utprekṣā* and an identification of the perceiving subject (*panon*) with

There can be little doubt that extended meanings of the word *rasa* began to appear at a relatively early date in the history of the OJ as a literary language. One of the most prominent uses of *rasa* in the *kakawin* is in contexts where its meaning is closest to phrases like "I feel" or "it seems" that are reflected in the modern Malay-Indonesian *rupa-rupanya*, "it seems, it appears." Examples include OJR 5.148 (*rasa mātya*, "feeling as if one might die"), AW 12.4 (*rasa tan i rāt*, "feeling as if not in this world"), HW 10.13 (*rasa ning prangĕn*, "feeling as if one will be attacked"), GK 11.4 (*a-rasa mātya ng enaka*, "feeling as if the best thing would be to die"), Sum 11.4 (*rasanya manangis*, "feeling as if one is crying"), and many more. Another use of the word *rasa*, which is also found with great frequency in the *kakawin*, is to refer to the essential message, content or theme of a spoken or written discourse, or even a gesture or form of behavior. In the Indian context the word *rasa* is not found with this meaning; a more technical term like *tātpārya*, which refers to the "intentionality" of a phrase or discourse, is used instead. An early example of this use of *rasa* in the OJ can be found in KR 5.51 at a point where Lakṣmaṇa is describing to Sītā the strange behavior of the golden deer:

> The content of its behavior (*rasa riy ulahnya*) was remarkable (*kādbhuta*); it looked at him (Rāma) as if unafraid "(*tumon sira tan matakut*)*ā*".

It appears that it was this use of *rasa* to refer to the purport of a discourse that led to one of the most important uses of the word in the *kakawin*. This is as *rasa kakawin*, one of the alternate names for the *bhāṣa kakawin* form of lyrics that represents a distinct and identifiable sub-genre of a short lyric within the *kakawin*. Comparable to the Indian *muktaka* in form, this type of lyric also represents a Javanese version of a courtly form of domestic literacy around courtship that once was widespread in the archipelago, and can indeed be compared to similar cultural patterns represented in works as far distant as the *Kokinshū* and *Gosenshū* of ninth and tenth century Japan, and the celebrated *Tale of Genji*, composed ca. 1005–10 by Lady Murasaki Shikibu.[37]

the self (*Panon, ātmā*) in texts like the *Pārthayajña* may reflect the influence of a non-dualist aesthetic philosophy like that of Abhinavagupta. See Acri 2006, 55–67, for a recent study that reveals the close textual connections of the Javano-Balinese *Tutur* tradition with the Śaivāgama traditions of India, especially Kashimiri schools like the Trika, Mata, and Krama. The further study of the influence of the Indian Śaivāgama traditions on the development of Śaivism in Java may provide us with a better foundation for understanding the epistemological basis for the development of the figural tradition of the *kakawin*.

37. This is not to say that there is any evidence to date for a direct connection between Javanese and Japanese forms of the courtly custom of exchanging love lyrics in the course of

Many of the features of the Javanese form of "exchange lyrics" have been studied in loving detail by Zoetmulder (1974). These include the writing of ephemeral love letters on petals of the fragrant *pandan*, or of arranging blossom sheaths of the *pandan* to resemble a "baby doll" (*anak-anakan*) designed to carry an inscribed message to a paramour reprimanding him/her as an "absent" parent who should return to share in the "parental affection" of the sender. We cannot be certain whether *kakawin* representations of the exchange of love lyrics represent everyday practices of the court, or a literary idealization of a pattern of behavior designed to ensure that eligible young women of the nobility were confined during their minority to ensure their restriction to a closely defined set of marital possibilities. Whatever the case may have been, there can be little doubt that the theme of an exchange of lyrical messages was an important and popular one for the composers of the *kakawin*.[38] The most spectacular case is to be found in the *Sumanasāntaka* of Mpu Monaguṇa, who recast the theme of Indumatī's "bridal choice ceremony" first developed by Kālidāsa in the *Raghuvaṃśa* (RV 5.76, 6.1–86) as a competition among suitors who must plead their case to the princess by composing spontaneous *bhāṣa kakawin* on their writing boards—and when rejected, compose an appropriate lament (*wilāpa, kakawin wilāpa*). One verse from the "winning series" composed by Aja reveals the kind of subtlety that was expected of a composition in *rasa kakawin* form:

Here, good lady, be seated on my lap,
 so long have I been pining for you
 who come to me like a rain cloud,
You who are cool mists to my burning longing,
 rumbling thunder to my desire,
 lightning that illuminates the darkness of my heart,

a romance, nor are the parallels precise in all details. Yet the resemblances are striking, as are the similarities of both Javanese and Japanese courtly traditions to forms of domestic literacy with a romantic character found from areas of insular Southeast Asia as far distant as the Lampung and Batak areas of Sumatra the highland Philippines. At the very least we should begin to think of the various Asian forms of "courtship lyric" in comparative perspective, thus following the lead of Reid 1988 in his study of broader economic, historical, and cultural patterns in pre-modern Southeast Asia. See also Hector Santos' discussion of the writing traditions of the Hanunóo and Buhid of Mindoro and the Tagbanwa of Palawan, each of them preserving a long history of domestic literacy that includes writing of love lyrics on materials like bamboo and horn (available at: http://www.bibingka.com/dahon/living/living.htm).

38. See Creese 2004 for an in-depth study of marital patterns and sexuality of East Java as reflected in the *kakawin* literature.

A veiling cloud of longing that concedes defeat
before the power of love,
and ends in restless heat
that leaves the heart's dejection as its traces,
You are the fine showers of my poetic rapture,
that disappear when regarded too closely,
but turns into gentle rainfall
when you allow me to take you on my lap.[39] (Sum 103.2)

The *bhāṣa kakawin* form is another of the sophisticated products of the later *kakawin* tradition that owes its origins to Mpu Kaṇwa, who demonstrated his skill in the form in the thirty-fifth canto of the AW.[40] As we have suggested earlier, these lyrical verses owe much to the sophisticated techniques of suggestion that first appear in Mpu Kaṇwa's work in AW 1.10. One series of verses in Canto 35 is particularly revealing in that it illustrates the fact that the process of inscribing poetry on written media was often accompanied by the poet's incantation of his or her lines, this despite the importance of figures developed around the physical act of inscription in the Javanese tradition. In AW 34.8–35.4 we catch a rare glimpse of a playful interpretation of what may have been the actual nature of poetic composition within courtly contexts of domestic literacy:

Arjuna wrote his lyric on a clean writing panel in the form of inscribed lines.
Looking up at it, it was a source of amusement, a place where his mind could wander.
But he completed only a single panel, leaving the rest unfinished.
Disturbed by seeing that something wasn't quite right, he read his verses over and over again. (AW 34.8)
"If you would seek me,
look carefully
at the first twig of *asana* in bloom.
My restless longing you will find, my lady,
in the birds that appear and disappear
against the slopes of distant mountains.

39. *ngke rakryan pakisapwan oněng alawas nghulun ibu sang apiṇḍa nīrada*
sang sangkub ni lulutku sang patĕr i kūngku kilat i pětěng i twas i nghulun
sang rĕm ning turidângalah sih apuput huyang amĕkasakĕn putĕk hati
sang truh-truh ni langönku mukṣa hiniḍĕp kinisapu sahajâtĕmah riris

40. See Hunter 1998, for a Balinese text and English translation of seven of these verses (AW 35.1–2, 11–15).

You may find my bewilderment
in the moon too soon overtaken
by the light of day, and will be reminded of me,
when you hear the call of the black cuckoo."

That was as far as he completed stringing figures together; now he took long thought, so that the end would be pleasing. (AW 35.2)

But lovely Tilottamā had been following him stealthily from behind, though he was unaware of it.
She felt disturbed that he had not completed his kakawin verses, and was unable to restrain herself,
So she sang a line in *bhāṣa* form, completing the verse left undone by Arjuna:
"For someone like you that indeed is faithfulness—to serve a poet as the best vow of devotion to a husband." (AW 35.3)

The sense of play that is developed here, and the importance of the acts of composition and inscription to the figural repertoire of the *bhāṣa kakawin* form, remained central to the *kakawin* tradition throughout the Kaḍiri period, and continued to exert strong influences on the aesthetics of Java and Bali as late as the nineteenth century. These elements of the Javano-Balinese aesthetic come out as surely in a *bhāṣa* verse from the thirteenth century describing Kṛṣṇa's longing for Rukmiṇī as they do in an illustration from the nineteenth century that pictures the "desiring prince, Panji" inscribing a petal of fragrant *pandan* destined to be sent to his paramour [Figure 25.1]:

"Oh you who vanished
from my dreams
at the moment I was awakened by soft
rumbling thunder,
Now I will search out the way to every
place you may have gone,
whether in blossoms of young saplings,
Or disappearing into dark, distant rain clouds
where *kalangkyang* hawks
call one to the other,
While if you disappear
into the grooves of the writing board
I will ask for you there,
then seek you by following the
dictates of the writing stylus." (*Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* 37.1)



FIGURE 25.1: Prince Panji writing a love lyric on a *pandan* blossom.[41]

From this brief review of the *bhāṣa kakawin* form we can surmise that the use of the word *rasa* as one of the alternate names for the embedded lyrics of the *kakawin* is meant to be suggestive of a wide range of meanings around *rasa*, but most prominently the sense of an "inner core" or "essence" of poetic form that owes its origin to the Indian tradition in the formative period prior to the innovations of Ānandavardhana. That the poetic devices developed in ancient Java for a highly condensed form of poetic expression were in many respects techniques of suggestion meant that the lyrical voice in the *kakawin* resonated with Indian models. These models continued to be enriched on the subcontinent all throughout the period when contact between Hindu and Buddhist scholars of South Asia and the archipelago remained constant. It should thus come as no

41. Balinese *wayang* style painting; early twentieth century. The author would like to express his gratitude to Dr Tom Cooper for permission to use this illustration from his collection of Balinese paintings.

surprise that Javanese poets who produced innovative works in twelfth century Kaḍiri appear to reflect the poetics of the Indian school of suggestion. We will now look more closely at these techniques of suggestion in the works of two of those authors, Mpu Panuluh and Mpu Dharmaja, both noted for the composition of *kakawin* that have stood the test of time.

G. The East Javanese Figural Tradition III: The Contributions of Mpu Panuluh

We have seen that the portrayal of processions in the *kakawin* represents one link between the traditions of *kāvya* and *kakawin* that demonstrates both the influence of Indian models and the innovations introduced by the poets of East Java. Another way to understand these linkages and variations is through the works of individual poets, each with a particular relationship to the values of the literary world in which they lived and worked.

I have suggested in an earlier chapter that the Old Javanese *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* (OJR) may be better understood as the product of a school of poetics, rather than the work of a single author, and in addition that the habit of identifying oneself as an "author" was as alien to the framers of the OJR as it was to the sculptors of the reliefs at Borobudur or Prambanan.[42] By contrast the East Javanese *kakawin* are frequently associated with the life histories of particular authors. These were literary stylists who enjoyed royal patronage of the sort that was common in South Asia throughout the history of the *kāvya*, and who at times spoke in intimate detail of their successes and failures in gaining the favorable attention of their patrons. This should not lead us to judge the latter by the standards appropriate to modern writers who work "in splendid isolation" to produce works destined for mass distribution and the enjoyment of literature in solitary acts of interiorized reading. Rather, we should look to the meta-poetic and autobiographical statements of the poets themselves in order to understand the literary life of their times.

Mpu Panuluh is one of the poets of the East Javanese tradition whose works provide the clearest details of the life of a poet working under royal patronage.

42. There are several verses late in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* that are written in the Indo-Javanese meter *jagaddhita* (OJR 26.50–51). One of these (OJR 26.50) refers to one "Yogīśwara" as the author of this early *kakawin*, and indeed this identification is accepted in the Balinese tradition. However, since the meter *jagaddhita* is unattested elsewhere in the OJR, I reason that these lines represent an interpolation at a later date, when the Indo-Javanese meters had been developed and come into regular usage. Once again it is with the AW that these innovative factors in the *kakawin* tradition begin to appear, not in the OJR.

He produced two major works—the OJ *Hariwangśa* (HW) and the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* (GK)—at the further ends of his career, and in addition completed the *Kakawin Bhāratayuddha* (BK), when he was ordered by his royal patron to take over the work begun by Mpu Sĕdah.[43] While there is some uncertainty about the name of the patron of Panuluh in his later years, there is no doubt that he enjoyed a long career. If Zoetmulder (1974: 269–78) is correct, after completing the HW and his contribution to the BK under the illustrious Jayabhaya (r. 1135–57 CE) he went on to complete the GK some 50 to 60 years later under the patronage of Śṛngga Kṛtajaya (r. 1194–1205/1222), the last king of an independent Kaḍiri.[44]

There are two verses from the epilogue of Mpu Panuluh's earliest work that shed light on the crucial role played by royal patrons in the poetic process, and on the performance aspect of "reading" as understood in ancient Java. Here Panuluh tells us of the displeasure of his royal patron upon discovering the many defects in the work of his "pupil" (*wuruk*), then goes on to describe his hope that future "readers" of his text will be granted the approval of their "listeners":

> Upon realizing the result of my passionate wandering in search of beauty,
> I offered it to my king, whose pen name is "new shoots of beauty."
> I presented my composition of the story, but then because it was flavorless, and incorrect in the arrangement of heavy and light syllables,
> His anger hotly flared from his displeasure that his teaching me the art of beauty had been to no avail.
> Because of his anger, and being rebuked over and over again by him,
> I was afraid, and for a long time avoided my writing board.[45]
> (HW 54.1)
> But I kept on writing anyway; if I was going to be laughed at what could be done about it, even if everything I did were to be treated with contempt?

43. See Zoetmulder 1974, 271 for a report on the Javanese legends that suggests that Mpu Sĕdah was murdered by order of his royal patron, Jayabhaya, due to the uncanny resemblance of his portrayal of Satyawatī to the king's wife.

44. The year 1205 CE provides the last known inscription of the king of Kaḍiri identified by Damais 1951, 14 as Śṛngga Kṛtajaya. The date 1222 is given in the *Nāgarakṛtāgama/Deśawarṇana* (composed ca. 1365) as the date that Kṛtajaya was defeated by Rangga-Rājasa (Ken Angrok), founder of the Singhasari-Majapahit dynasty.

45. *ryantuk ni nghulun anglĕnglĕng raga-ragan humatur i naranātha lung langö*
awwat kekĕtan ing kathā kunĕng apan wirasa guru-laghunya tan patūt
tan dwângdagdha wuyung nira n wiwal i tan hana ni tĕwas ira n muruk langö
wet ning krodha dinuhkha-dukha-nira ri nghulun awĕdi lanātakis karas

> I only hoped that it might bring about the universal victory of the king, and the auspicious state of the realm.
> May those who copy and care for this work be endowed with the power to be successful, first of all those who read, and likewise those who listen,
> For merit alone is my aim, I (who am called) Panuluh, who composed this work, the tale of the lineage of Wiṣṇu.[46] (HW 54.2)

Panuluh's determination that his work might be "read and heard" suggests the kind of public context of literary activity that Rājaśekhara described in his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*:

> [A]t many courts large open-air meetings (*samāja*) or court receptions (*sabhā*) were arranged for poets and those learned in kāvya at which the president requested some poets to give readings of their works or, having set them difficult tasks such as improvising on a given theme [...] pronounced judgment on their performances.[47]

It may appear that Panuluh's praise of his royal patron is in part hyperbole, yet he also praises Jayabhaya in the *manggala* verses of his HW as his teacher in poetry, and a royal patron deserving of the pen name *lung langö ing langö*, "enchanting tendrils of the rapture of beauty" (HW 1.3d). Jayabhaya stands at the beginning of a long line of kings who are more frequently identified in the inscriptional record by their "poetic pen names" than by their official titles. Jayabhaya may thus have been a royal patron who was not just the supervisor of a poetic *sabhā*, but a composer and instructor in the poetic arts in his own right.

The institutions of royal patronage for the literary arts, of an established canon of literary judgment, and of specialized arenas for participation in the enjoyment of the literary arts are all elements explicitly described in the East Javanese *kakawin* that suggest a settled context of political and economic life, at least for those outside the limited arenas of political struggle. We know that there were frequent enough upheavals in the political life of the Kaḍiri period (ca. 1042–1205/1222 CE); yet overall this was a time when state initiatives encouraging the expansion of irrigation networks and direct control of the thriving sea trade had created an unprecedented level of prosperity that easily supported a thriving urban culture around the court, and in rural institutions linked to the courts.

46. *ndan kĕdwākĕna teki mon guyu-guyun mapa ng ulaha sadenya cĕnggana moghângdeya kadigjayañ juga ri sang prabhu nguni-nguni haywa ning jagat sang śuddhyânularâstu-siddhya karuhun sang amaca nguniweh sang angrĕngö āpan nghing yaśa don iking Panuluh angracana carita Wiṣṇuwarṇana*
47. As cited and translated in Lienhard 1984, 16.

Thanks to the long career of Panuluh we can begin to assess the further history of the figural tradition that was introduced with such vigor into the literary traditions of ancient Java with the composition of the OJR and its direct incorporation of the figures and tropes put on view by Bhaṭṭi in his *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (BK). In my comments in an earlier chapter on the *utprekṣā* found in OJR 6.122, I have noted that the framer(s) of the OJR used non-Sanskrit words like *wruh*, "know, sense, perceive" to support a Javanese development of figures like *utprekṣā* and *vyatireka*. Another verse from the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (BK 10.70. translated in OJR 11.8) appears to stand in the background of Panuluh's poetic education and tastes, for he further developed the same figure in several sophisticated versions that span the length of his career. This verse, which we studied in an earlier chapter from this volume both in terms of its illustration of the *śabdālaṃkāra kāñci-yamaka* and the *arthālaṃkāra utprekṣāvayava*, makes use of the word *kadi* ("like") in connection with the verb phrase (rather than a noun phrase), a usage that distinguishes the *utprekṣā* from the simile (*upamā*) in the Indian tradition.

Panuluh's earliest development of this figure is already sophisticated and innovative. The moon is identified with the Love God, but the darkness, which is set to flight in fear of the moon, is also characterized as an agent of erotic impulses as it seeks shelter in the dreams of sleeping men:

Hariwangśa 13.3

To shorten the tale, the moon rose higher and higher into the sky,
no longer enveloped by clouds,
Like an arrow of the brilliantly glowing Love God, its clear intention
was to slay all those enraptured by beauty,
But the darkness—penetrated by light spreading in all directions—
shuddered and fled, shrinking itself to fit into the safety of caves,
Or approached sleeping men for intercourse, transforming into dreams
that gave rise to pleasure and delight.[48]

In his later work, Panuluh developed this image twice. In GK 12.4 he returns to the style of OJR 11.8, giving a polished but prosaic rendering of the flight of the darkness as the Moon God makes his entrance that closes with a rhetorical question:

How should darkness be bold enough to approach the moon; as soon
as it is spotted, it will surely shrink down, stealthily taking cover.[49]

48. *sangsiptan sira sangśayâruhur awas tan kāwaran nīrada*
sākṣāt hrū hyang Anangga bhāswara mahâhyun matyana ng wwang langö
trus kawrâlaradan tikang pětěng arěs lunghā humöt ring gihā
len prāptâng[la]kini wwang amrěm atěmah swapnâmangun lālana.

49. *ndi n wānyâmapaga n katinghalana mingkus angěněs angusir tawěng-tawěng*

In GK 26.1 Panuluh returns to the "psychological" style he first began to develop in HW 13.3. Here the moon, absorbed in its own desire, first "urges elopement" (*akon ahañanga*) on those who are "fatigued from suppressing longing" (*angel angöl huněng*), then it chases down the darkness for its role in the work of (erotic) enchantment. Finally it moves onward to the west in order to provide a screen (of darkness) behind itself that will shelter those who fear being overheard (and observed) in compromising liaisons:

Ghaṭotkacāśraya 26.1
Finally the moon came out, brightly spreading its light over the firmament.
As if absorbed in desire, it urged elopement on those fatigued from suppressing their longing
And hunted down all darkness, strongly to be censured for its work of enchantment.
Passing on, it left behind the eastern quarters, its intention—to provide a screen for anyone who might suffer embarrassment on account of those who listen in the night.[50]

We know that Panuluh composed his GK during his later years, and that his work in this *kakawin* is that of a mature writer writing with the confidence born of long experience.[51] Other writers had begun to develop extended uses of "figures of superimposition" (*āropa*) like *utprekṣa* and *vyatireka* in scenes that characterized the natural elements of gardens as "apprehensive" lest their beauty be bested by that of a human or divine heroine, but few could equal Panuluh at the height of his powers. The three verses that follow reach a pinnacle in the East Javanese art of figuration that inspired later poets like Monaguṇa, who produced an innovative reflection of Panuluh's *utprekṣā* in GK 3.4 and *vyatireka* in GK 3.5–6 in verses of a similar kind found in his *Sumanasāntaka* (Sum 2.1–3):

The enchantments of beautiful gardens grew uneasy when she emerged half-naked from her toilette.
The blossoms of the twining jasmine dropped off, perplexed, fearing they could never counter the fragrant beauty of her chignon.
The fluttering leaves of the *imba* tree appeared concerned lest her eyebrows seek to engage them in battle,

50. *lalu wĕkasan mĕtu ng wulan awāngḍaḍari kuměñar ing nabhastala kadi-kadi tamtam ing rimang akon ahañanga ring angel angöl huněng sahana nikang pĕtĕng rinarah ardha pinelĕh ing akārya lĕnglĕnga linalu tikang karīng akiwa donya tawĕnga ri wirang ning angrengö*
51. See Zoetmulder 1974, 269–78, on the career of Mpu Panuluh.

While the sacred lotus blossoms wilted, afraid they would be overcome by passion if they looked into her eyes. (GK 3.4)[52]

How could the sharp young shoots of the cinnamon tree have the power to wound, compared with her eyebrows when, given attention, she turned coyly away, attended,
Or the bee gave up its desire (to draw near,), made apprehensive by the brilliant flashing of her teeth?
The fruits of the ivory coconut palm grew despondent, seeing her breasts that seem to have been appropriated from the gongs in the orchestra of the Love God,
While tender budding branches never bore fruit, deprived of strength by trying to match the suppleness of her waist. (GK 3.5)[53]

The tendrils of the *gadung* lily grew limp as from afar they reached out to wind themselves around the graceful forearms of the princess.
Catching sight of her slender fingers, the *bakung* lilies came near, but there were none who succeeded in touching her,
While the fragrant *pandan* blossoms waited respectfully, apprehensive lest their beauty be undone by the touch of her calves,
Beauty was indeed her natural state, most subtle in form, inspiring love, worthy of praise as the pinnacle of poetic achievement. (GK 3.6)[54]

Panuluh's mastery of the *kakawin* technique, and his special attention to figures such as *utprekṣā* and *vyatireka*, suggests a thorough training in the poetic tradition of *kāvya*. However, it is also possible to explain his proficient use of figures of South Asian origin without invoking Indian models, since we need have looked no further than the OJR to find models for verses like HW 13.3, GK 12.4, and 26.1, and his description of the "apprehensions" of the garden in GK 3.4–6 is a theme he had himself developed earlier in the *Bhāratayuddha*

52. *arĕs lĕngĕng i ramya ning taman i rūm nira ri huwus irâhyas angligā*
sĕkarnya manguněng rurū prihatin epw awĕdi pamapasa mrik ing gĕlung
katon arĕngu ron ing ima niki nāgata ri halis irâhyun apranga
tĕkeng sarasijâlume tĕngi-tĕngin (read: tĕnge-tĕngĕn?) kagalakana tuminghal ing mata

53. *ndin anggarita sinwam ing kayu manis ri laṭi nira n inge sinewaka*
umūra mara pakṣa ning bhramara nāgata ri larap i kengis ing waja
pucang gaḍing alök anoliha ri santĕn ira n inaku kangsya ning smara
ri tan paphala ning sĕwö satata kanglihan angiringi pambĕt ing tĕngah

54. *lawan lĕmĕs i lunggah ing gaḍung adoh milĕta ri lungayan suputrikā*
tumon i kucup ing wakung kaputihan marĕki jariji tan hanângĕne
puḍak mrik asiwī tuwi wruh anahâgigu harasakĕne wĕtis nira
apan purih i rūm nirâpangus arājasa pujin adhikāra ring langö

(BY 47.3, on the beauty of Satyawatī). As we will see, it is in the work of Mpu Dharmaja that we find a poet who not only alludes to Indian models in some of his figures, but also explicitly refers to a mythological event that has the effect of transferring the entire tradition of poetic and natural beauty from India to Java.

H. The East Javanese Figural Tradition IV: Mpu Dharmaja and the *Smaradahana*

Even if Java was not directly influenced by the rise of the South Asian "school of suggestion" there are striking enough similarities between the poetics of the kāvya and the East Javanese kakawin to suggest that the further development of a Javano-Balinese school of *alaṃkāra* cannot have occurred in isolation, but in some sense must represent a "distant mirror" of Indian developments. This may be particularly true of Mpu Dharmaja. His *Smaradahana*, a Javanese version of the tale of the immolation of the Love God immortalized by Kālidāsa, appears to refer in several ways to an Indian original. The most obvious of these references can be found in a fascinating set of verses from the epilogue to the *Smaradahana* (SD) that suggest not only that Dharmaja was indebted to Kālidāsa, but that in his eyes the island of Java itself had a unique role to play in what we might term the mytho-poetics of the Sanskrit cosmopolis.[55] Unfortunately, we cannot comment here on the full 16 verses that Mpu Dharmaja devoted to this theme; however, we can summarize by saying that they develop a series of subtly interwoven verses comparing his royal patrons to the Love God and his consort, Rati, goddess of passion, and figuring them as embodying the unity of Janggala and Kaḍiri, the two halves of the East Javanese polity after Airlangga's division of his kingdom in ca. 1042 CE.

First the poet speaks of the embodiment of the Love God in human desire after his immolation by Śiva, whom he had awakened from his cosmic mediation:

> The ages had moved on, and the Kali-age was now past,
> The Love God had taken a new birth after his destruction,
> At the command of Lord Śiwa, along with the daughter of the mountain,
> The Love God effortlessly took form as the Bodiless God, present
> wherever there are desire and passion.[56] (SD 38.12)

55. See Poerbatjaraka 1926/1992, 43–45, for what appears to be the first commentary on these verses.

56. *lunghā ng yugānta kalikāla huwus kalalwan*
sang hyang Smarânguwahi janma tĕlas pralīṇa
ājñā hyang Īśa makamukhya Girīndraputrī
icchā bhaṭāra ring Anangga sakāma-kāma

Then the poet describes the beautiful island of Java, located along the southern sea-lane, and a special place of pilgrimage by the sage Agastya, who is characterized in early Javanese myths as the bringer of Hindu-Buddhist civilization to the archipelago:

> There was a land that had been pointed out by the daughter of the mountain,
> Pleasant in every way, located along the southern route, in Java, the central land,
> Hidden away in the salty sea, comparable to Mount Meru,
> A pure place, tirelessly visited by the sage Agastya. (SD 38.13)[57]

While there is nothing controversial or unusual in the preceding, the poet now surprises us by describing Java as the form taken by a "famous book from Kashmir about the youthful god, Kumāra" when the god (Śiwa) became enraged at seeing the age "turned on its head" (*singsal*), apparently in South Asia, or perhaps more specifically in Kashmir:

> Let the truth be heard about how it came to be in olden times,
> In Kashmir there was a renowned book about the youthful god, Kumāra,
> When the age turned topsy-turvy, in a flash it was cursed by the god,
> And turned into an island of wondrous beauty, shaped like an enormous spear. (SD 38.14)[58]

This passage tells us not only that Dharmaja must have been familiar with the *Kumārasaṃbhava* of Kālidāsa, but that he views his own land as a veritable embodiment of the poetic virtues enshrined in the *kāvya* and developed in a local idiom in the *kakawin*.[59] Moreover, this transformation of Kālidāsa's *kāvya*

57. *wwantĕn pradeśa katuduh Girināthakanyā*
nghing ramya dakṣinapathe Jawa madhyadeśa
kāntargateng lawaṇasagara meru tulya
pāwitra lot para-paran bhagawān Agastya

58. *tattwanya ngūni ring uśāna rĕngön kramanya*
ring Kāśmira n pratita pustaka sang Kumāra
singsal yuga kṣaṇa śināpa tĕkap bhaṭāra
nūsâtiramya tĕmahanya magöng halimpung

59. In the following ten verses of his *kakawin* (SD 38.15–17, 39.1–7) Dharmaja describes the incarnation of the Love God and his spouse in the land of Java, and the beauty that emanates from their royal union, then closes his poem with two verses confessing his inadequacy as a poet and describing the poignancy of his reunion with his mother, who had given him up for dead during the long years he wandered the "hills and seacoasts" seeking inspiration for his attempt to master the art of poetry.

into the form of the land of Java carries with it the high standard of excellence in Sanskrit learning that is associated even today with the Kashmiri traditions of the early second millennium.

If we turn back to the initial, *manggala* verses of Mpu Dharmaja's *kakawin* we find what may be a more indirect—but no less fascinating—reference to Kālidāsa in a series of verses that enumerate some of the sites of beauty in nature and human experience that represent ephemeral sites for the presence of the Love God, and are accessible by way of a concentrated creative effort in the poetic arts. This series of verses reminds us of Zoetmulder's (1974: 178–79) elucidation of the "religio poetae" of the *kakawin* world:

> [R]eligious writings of ancient Java [...] are not so much theoretical expositions as [...] treatises on the practice of mysticism or *yoga* [...] a kind of *yoga* which seeks to find the deity through media in which the god is present or into which he descends.

Dharmaja's exposition in the *manggala* of the SD of a series of figures that have been momentarily inscribed in particular past times or places is an eloquent expression of the aims and goals of the practice of a "poet's yoga." In the first verse of the *manggala*, Dharmaja uses a series of *rūpaka* to align poetic praxis with basic elements of priestly ritual; some of these—like the ringing of the priest's bell—are still recognizable in the contemporary Balinese ritual setting, and used in figures by Balinese poets composing in the *geguritan* form:

> The poet's ritual worship of all that is beautiful is aimed at the long life and health of the king.
> The place of the ritual is a blossoming lotus, a divine image bathed in the mists of the fourth month.
> The scattered grains of the ritual are the syllables of a beautiful poem inscribed on the writing boards of a poet's pavilion,
> While spreading mists are the incense, and the priest's bell is the weeping sound of bees upon the blossoms.[60] (SD 1.1)

Another verse aligns these ritual expressions of the poetic arts with eroticism, physical and natural beauty and the media of writing, a series of parallels that are ubiquitous in the aesthetic traditions of the *kakawin*:

> Your places of being are many—in the bedchamber, in swelling mounds of the breasts,

60. *pūjā ning kawi sanggraheng kalĕngĕngan mangde kadīrghayuṣan/ munggw ing padma mĕkar pratiṣṭha siniram de ning rĕrĕb ning kapat/ wījanyâkṣara lambang endah inurākĕn ring tĕtö ning yaśa/ dhūpākara limut maghĕṇṭa panangis ning ṣaḍpadā ning sĕkar//*

In the grooves of the writing-board, the incisions on a wooden writing beam, the point of the writing stylus,
In the glory of a writing surface, an expanse of mist illuminated by rays of the sun,
In a flood of tears that wipes away the powder of a beauty's face, and in stems of new shoots of the *gadung* lily.[61] (SD 1.3)

For our study perhaps the most decisive verse from Mpu Dharmaja's *manggala* is SD 1.5. Here Dharmaja presents a series of six "locations" where the Love God has momentarily taken figural form, either in times past or in well-known sites of inspiration in the aesthetic geography of the *kakawin*:

[You] who are known at the seashore as "the one of awe and passion," while in the mountains you are "distant enchantment,"
As "passionate longing" in the empty sky, or as "the one lost in thought"—that is how you were known back then, gazing on a rain cloud,
As "one who grieves" when you sought an ascetic's solace in a garden, as "the one entranced" when there was a spreading mist upon the sea,
And as "the black bee infatuated by desire," so is it heard, when you became a royal sovereign.[62] (SD 1.5)

Several of the personified figures from this verse refer to tropes well known from the *kakawin* corpus: "the one of awe and passion," for example, is based on the words *rĕs raga*, "awe and passion" that are frequently used to describe poetic responses to particularly awe-inspiring aspects of the natural landscape. The sensation of *rĕs*, a combination of awe and fear in the face of great beauty, is found especially in descriptions of the seashore or mountains, where a similar aesthetic response could be captured with the word *lĕnglĕng*, one of the several bivalent words from the OJ aesthetic lexicon that in this case refers both to the "enchantment" caused by natural beauty, and the beauty itself. Other figures in this verse appear to refer to historical persons who are assumed to be familiar to the reader (or "listener") of the text. The erotically charged phrase "black bee infatuated by desire" in the (d) line, for example, appears to refer to a sovereign

61. *tan tunggal kahananta ring pakasutan laywan hunor ing susu/*
sang munggw ing jurang ing karas tutugan ing lambang gurū ning tanah/
śrī ning panggĕlaran ṭikā sadawatā ning rĕm kasĕnwan rawi/
ring lwah lūh amĕgat pupur kita hane tunggak ni lung ning gaḍung//
62. *sang rĕs rāga ngaranta ring pasir adoh lĕnglĕng kiteng parwata/*
sang kingking kita ring tawang sang angarang nāhan ngaranteng rĕmĕng/
sang śokângaluseng taman sang alangö yan sanghub ing sāgara/
ring kumbang mangajap ngaranta karĕngö nāhan dadinta prabhu//

king in whom the Love God incarnated at some time in the past, perhaps the recent past.[63]

It is the figure developed in the second half of the (b) line of SD 1.5 that is of special note. The subject of this clause is "the one lost in thought" (*sang angarang*) who is said to "have had that name" (*ngaranta*) at some distant time or place (*nāhan*) when "gazing lost in thought" (*angarang*) on a cloud" (*ing rĕmĕng*). The word *nāhan* is crucial here. In its most common role it serves as a discourse marker that refers to a previous section of narrative. However, it can also refer (as it does here) to some referent at a temporal distance from the current stretch of narrative. The effect of this combination of *nāhan* with phrases that refer to one "lost in thought, gazing upon a cloud" is to produce a clause meaning "the one lost in thought, who—back then—was gazing upon a cloud." The figural effect achieved here suggests that Mpu Dharmaja is referring very subtly to the attitude of the hero of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāṣa towards the cloud that carried his message of love and longing to his faraway wife. With this "distant" reference Dharmaja incorporates into his chain of figural "locations" a subtle reference to the master poet he invokes again in SD 38.14 when he speaks of "the book of Kumāra" (*pustaka sang Kumāra*).

To those familiar with the practice of referring to royalty with their "literary names" that is a constant feature of both the *kakawin* and the inscriptional record of East Java it should come as no surprise that the last line of this verse, subtly evoking the presence of a ruling monarch, leads in the following verse (SD 1.6) to a eulogy of the poet's royal patron:

> If in war, you are the lion—valiant, youthful, fittingly handsome,
> carrying the banner of heroism on the battlefield,
> While in the composition of poetry you are the meter "flower of
> passion," a fitting model for all the world to follow,
> On the sleeping mat you are the remedy of passion, regarded as an
> unfailing mantra that ensures success.
> You are Śrī Kāmeśwara, ever famed in the entire world, your name
> spoken over and over again.

From this brief review of some aspects of the *manggala* and epilogue of the SD we can see why the *kakawin* should be understood as playing a vital role in what Pollock (1996) has termed the "poetics of polity" in East Java. In verses like those of Mpu Dharmaja, we can begin to see how the aestheticization of the

63. This could very well be a reference to the earlier consecration of the poet's patron Śrī Kāmeśwara as a royal sovereign (*prabhu*), a matter Mpu Dharmaja develops further in the following verse.

political realm was played out in the details of literary composition. When a reigning monarch was characterized as skilled in the poetic arts—indeed more skilled than the authors whose reputations have lived on in literary works—or was referred to with a "literary name" in preference to his "birth name" (*nāma prasūti*) or "consecration name" (*nāmābhiṣeka*), we can be certain that we are in a world that superimposed aesthetic norms on the realm of political action. The *kakawin* can thus be understood as making a major contribution to an ideology that linked human political actors with a supra-mundane world whose natural place in human society was understood as the realm of the arts, and to a regime of courtly life fashioned in terms of aesthetic models.

I. Conclusion

The capacity of the *kakawin* poets to produce effects of suggestion, and to carefully detail emotional states or the highly desirable state of "aesthetic rapture" (*langö, kalangwan*), ensured that *kakawin* were understood as fully equipped to provide a literary embodiment of supra-mundane forces; the mythical dimensions of these forces were thus as clearly expressed in the dominant literary idiom as they were in the aestheticized conduct of the court.

It may seem fanciful to use the term "real" to refer to domains imagination, but this is precisely how the *kakawin* poets themselves understood the relationship of the courtly idiom and a metaphysical realm; time and again they figure a reigning king or queen (whether literary or actual) as being a deity who has "descended" (*manurun, anurun*) to take their place in a courtly, human setting. In the *Hariwangśa* of Mpu Panuluh, for example, Wiṣṇu is said to have descended as Jayabhaya (HW 1.2), who reigned in East Java between 1135 and 1157 CE, while as we have noted earlier Dharmaja speaks of the Love God and his wife, Rati, as having "descended" as the rulers of Daha/Kaḍiri and Janggala. In other cases the descent is more literary than actual, as in the case of the *Sutasoma*, where Brahma, Wiṣṇu, and Īśwara are said to have descended to earth as rulers during the *kṛta, tṛta*, and *dwāpara* ages (Sut 1.4b–c), but that "with the arrival of the Kali age, the Lord of the Buddhas has descended in order to slay all doers of evil" (*n prāpta ng kali śrī Jinapati manurun matyana ng kāla mūrkha*).

There is nothing unusual or remarkable in these accounts, which are legion in Indian panegyrics and royal genealogies. What makes the Javanese case unique is the degree to which the development of a literary aesthetic was reflected in the parallel development of an aestheticized form of court behavior that lived on throughout the history of the court life of Java. Time and time again we are

reminded of the "courtly" (*sabhya*) behavior of royal protagonists like Prince Angganātha (Sum 44.2), or of the ladies-in-waiting of the court (Sum 10.7, 28.1, 41.2).

Similar references to courtly behavior are not unusual in the *kakawin* produced in Bali (AbhW 59.5, 61.5), while evidence for the deep-rooted character of the court politesse show up as well in the curious fact that the late OJ text *Navanātya* ("The Nine Dances") is not at all concerned with the Indian tradition of dramatic dance, as its name implies, but with the organization and behavioral norms of the court. Perhaps the term *inggita* holds for us the most important evidence for the long-term effects of a focus on the perfection of behavior. Harking back to an early period in the development of Indian theories of dramatic criticism, and reflected in the critical terminology of the *Bharatanātyaśāstra*, the South Asian meanings of this term include "change of the voice [...] motion of various parts of the body as indicating the intentions; hint, sign, gesture." The term must have been taken up very early in the archipelago, since it shows up in OJR 11.49 as a form of knowledge about gestures, or a science of gesture (*wĕruh ring inggita*).[64] In HW 4.7 we find a typical case where a messenger notes a slight hesitation on the part of Kṛṣṇa and judges from this that it is time to take his leave:

> Understanding the king's subtle gesture he asked leave to go, speaking calmly while bowing reverently with folded hands (*wruh ing inggita ndan amuhun maluya ris awuwus kṛtañjali*).

Sum 42.11 represents a classic example of a case where a princess is forced to maintain a strong sense of composure, knowing full well that her maidservants are expert in the science of gesture:

> It was said that on the following day she would chose a king of her choice at the *swayambara*,
> But in her innermost heart she only felt discomfiture, for it was said that those who looked on would judge her loose and easy,
> For a *swayambara* had never been held before, and she would be the first to be so burdened.
> That was why she was discrete with her maidservant, who was wise in the knowledge of subtle gestures.[65]

64. The uses of the term *inggita* in the OJ literature suggest that this term was borrowed at an early stage in the development of the Indian critical tradition, thus reflecting processes noted for Buddhist, Sāṅkhya, and Śaivāgama philosophical trends by Nihom 1994, 1995 and Acri 2005, 2006.

65. *tambe rakwa sira n swayambarakĕnâmiliha sakaharĕp nira prabhu*
ndān amběk nira kewalâwirang i līnga ning umulat anĕnggahâhangan

As any student of the history of post-Majapahit Java is aware, the vicissitudes of several centuries marked by both internal struggles for power and an increasingly difficult encounter with colonialism did not put an end to Javanese cultural development, though to be sure these factors had major effects on the nature and direction of change. While the unique aesthetic of the *kakawin* could not be sustained after the upheavals of the sixteenth century and the collapse of the "Sanskrit cosmopolis" that had nourished its roots, the innovations of the poets of the *kakawin* lived on in several ways. In Java we can read the traces of their voices in the richly semiotic poetic and dramatic forms of the courts, as well as in the further development of a culture of refined linguistic and behavioral politesse.

In Bali, talented poets continued to produce *kakawin* in the classical style well into the nineteenth century, and even today have never ceased to enjoy the public reading and translation of the *kakawin* into Balinese. Indeed the formal style of Balinese used to translate the *kakawin* in the context of *kakawin* reading clubs (*pesantian, pepaosan*) represents the continuous reproduction of an oral, literary dialect that is still open to change and innovation. Another form of innovation can be traced in the development of the *kidung* and *geguritan* literatures of Bali, each associated with a particular form of language and metrical structure, but all still drawing on the figural resources of OJ.

Although we may not have a record of the analysis of poetics by Javanese and Balinese commentators, we have more than sufficient evidence of a profound expertise in the application of principles of figuration. With that in mind we end this chapter with a wry comment by Tanakung on the nature of poetic practice. This verse is to be found in his *Wṛttasañcaya* (WS 48), a treatise on metrics constructed in the form of a *dūta-kāvya*, or "messenger poem," in which a brahmani goose serves as the messenger between the lovelorn narrator and his absent beloved. The composition of this work of the late fifteenth century is further complicated by the requirement that each verse should embody one of the Sanskrit *gaṇa-vṛtta* meters and furthermore should have the name of that meter embedded in the verse in a form that in some sense allows a continuous narrative of the tale. The most fomous messenger-poem is the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa, which is composed throughout in the *mandākrāntā* meter.[66]

āpan tan hana ngūni kewala sirâmungari pinakakabwatan hañar
yekā hetu nirâwiweka kalawan kaka-kaka wihikan ring inggita

66. See Hunter 2001 for a recent study of the *Wṛttasañcaya*. As noted there, Tanakung arranged exposition of a display of metrical forms in the form of a "messenger poem" (*dūta-kāvya*) that is reminiscent of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa and perhaps illustrates one more point at which the poets of East Java paid subtle homage to their lasting influence on composition in *kakawin* form.

In the verse illustrated later the name of the meter is the rather uncommon phrase *dodhaka-wṛtta*. *Dodhaka* is an unusual word in Sanskrit, usually glossed as "sly servant who steals from his master," and this is the sense that Tanakung clearly intended in his verse on the nature of the poetic experience.[67] In the preceding verses the hero of the tale has been entreating the goose to convey his message of longing to his distant paramour, while in this verse the poet himself offers a commentary on the likelihood of a waterfowl's paying heed to the words of a human being, and what this tells us about the way poets distort reality in order to achieve poetic effects:

> Thus were the words of that marvelous waterfowl,
> But when really would a bird pay attention to a human?
> It can only come about from being ordained by the logic of poetry,
> That comes upon one in a rush, like a thief intent on his master's possessions.[68]

This comment on the nature of the poetic vision comes very close to the end of the initial, Javanese phase of the history of the *kakawin*. *Kakawin* continued to be written on Bali for several hundred years more without any apparent lessening of quality and seriousness of purpose. However, the relative lack in the later tradition of meta-poetic statements like that of Tanakung in WS 48 may lead us to wonder whether a certain delight in both philosophical and poetic aspects of the art of the figure was lost with the political upheavals that spelled the end of the era of the Sanskrit cosmopolis in the archipelago.

Perhaps Tanakung's dictum expresses best the greatest ongoing contribution of the world that produced the *kāvya* to the aesthetic forms of the archipelago—a delight in the possibilities of "the logic of poetry" and a profound focus on the possibilities of figuration as a medium for developing an aesthetic vision suited to the needs of an emerging polity. The vigor with which the poets of East Java

Mandākrāntā is one of the many meters of the Indian tradition that were adopted in Java. See Hunter 2009a, for a recent study that examines the use of *yati* (caesura) in a number of the meters adopted by Javanese poets from the Indian tradition, as well as the development of Indo-Javanese meters based on the principles of the quantitative (*gaṇa-vṛtta*) meters of India.

67. See Monier-Williams 1899/1981, 498, "robbing one's own master [...] name of a meter."

68. *mangkana śabda nireng khaga dibya*
ring kapana ng wihagâhiḍĕp wwang
mogha dine tĕkap ing kawi-tarkka
śighra ḍatĕng kadi Dodakawṛtta

Aichele 1926, 938; 1931, 177 called attention to this verse in his comments on OJ uses of the term *tarka* in BY 6.4b. It is found in WS 48c in the phrase *kawi-tarkka*, which I have translated as "the logic of poetry."

pursued the perfection of poetic form meant that they brought to the tradition of *kakawin* composition a series of innovations and changes that illustrate the expressive capacities of both *kāvya* and *kakawin*.

Abbreviations

AW	*Arjunawiwāha* (*kakawin*)
BrP	*Brahmaṇḍapūrana* (Gonda 1932; OJ prose work)
DW	*Deśawarṇana* (= *Nagarakṛtāgama*; *kakawin*)
KK	*Kuñjarakārṇadharmakāthana* (*kakawin*)
OJR	Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa, or *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* (KR)
KY	*Kṛṣṇāyana* (*kakawin*)
OJ	Old Javanese language
OJED	*Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (P. J. Zoetmulder with S. O. Robson, 1982)
TK	*Tantri Kāmandaka* (OJ prose work)
Utt	*Uttarakanda* (OJ prose work in Parwa form)

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Balinese Source

Geguritan Brayut. Transcription by Ida Bagus Gede Geria for the collection of the Gedung Kirtya Library, Singaraja, Bali; based on a palm leaf manuscript now in the possession of the priestly household *Geria Ulah* of Siděměn village in Karangasem district. According to the colophon included in the transcription the copying of the palm leaf manuscript of *Geria Ulah* was completed on 2 July 1973 by Si Děměn, a servant-scribe, or *parěkan* of the priestly household *Geria Pidada*, also in Siděměn village.

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Notes on Editors and Contributors

Editors

Yigal Bronner is an associate professor in the Department of Asian Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He specializes in Sanskrit poetry and poetic theory and South Asian intellectual history more broadly. He is the author of *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* (2010).

David Shulman is Renee Lang Professor of Humanistic Studies at the Hebrew University. A student of John Marr, he has published widely on the cultural history of Southern India and on philological topics in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu, often together with V. Narayana Rao, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Don Handelman. His recent publications include *More than Real: A History of Imagination in South India* (2012).

Gary Tubb is Professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations and in the College at the University of Chicago, and Faculty Director of the University of Chicago Center in Delhi. He works on Sanskrit literature, poetics, grammar, and philosophy, and is the author (with Emery R. Boose) of *Scholastic Sanskrit: A Manual for Students.*

Contributors

Allison Busch is an associate professor in the department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. Her research centers on Hindi literature and the cultural history of Mughal India. She is the author of *Poetry of Kings* (2011).

Phyllis Granoff is the Lex Hixon Professor of World Religions at Yale University. The former editor of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, she has written widely on classical Indian art, religion, and literature. She has curated several exhibits of Jain art in New York and Boston and is currently working on manuscripts from medieval India. She has also translated contemporary fiction from Bengali and Oriya.

Thomas M. Hunter lectures on the Sanskrit and Indonesian languages at the University of British Columbia. A student of the late A. L. Becker, he has published widely on the impact of Sanskrit poetics on the development of the literature in Old Javanese. He has been a Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities (1996), the Institute for Advanced Study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2003–4), and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (2006–7). His research focuses on the role of language in early state formation of Southeast Asia and the development of multiple speech registers in languages of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

Peter Khoroche studied with Sir Harold Bailey and John Brough in Cambridge and with V. Raghavan in Madras. After teaching Sanskrit at SOAS in the early 1970s, he chose independence and has since then pursued an interest in modern British art as well as in Sanskrit literature. His most recent book is a translation, with Herman Tieken, of Hāla's *Sattasaī* (2009).

Charles Malamoud was Directeur d'études at the Ecole pratique des hautes études, Sorbonne, Paris, until his retirement in 1999. His main field is Vedic mythology, ritual, and poetics. He has also written on political theory in ancient India and on Sanskrit poetry.

Dan Martin completed his doctoral degree in Tibetan Studies at Indiana University in 1991. His publications include over 30 articles as well as books including *Mandala Cosmogony* (1994), *Tibetan Historie* (1997), and *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, (2001). His main area of research is the cultural history of Tibet, from the tenth century to the twentieth. He is currently a literary translator for The Institute of Tibetan Classics.

Lawrence McCrea is an associate professor of Sanskrit Studies at Cornell University. He is the author of *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir* (2008), co-author (with Parimal Patil) of *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (2010), and co-editor (with Yigal Bronner and Whitney Cox) of *South Asian Texts in History: Critical Engagements with Sheldon Pollock* (2011). He has published numerous articles on Sanskrit poetry, poetics, hermeneutics, language theory, and epistemology.

Velcheru Narayana Rao is Distinguished Visiting Professor at Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Earlier he taught at University of Wisconsin–Madison and University of Chicago. He published widely on Telugu literature, history and culture, many with David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. His latest publication is *Girls for Sale*, a translation of *Kanyasulkam*, a play by Gurajada Apparao (2007, Indian edition 2011).

Herman Tieken is an independent researcher. His main interests are in Sanskrit and Tamil literature. His most recent publication is a translation, together with Peter Khoroche, of Hāla's *Sattasaī*, *Poems of Life and Love in Ancient India* (2009).

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